CONVENT LIFE

THE MEANING OF A RELIGIOUS VOCATION

BY

MARTIN J. SCOTT, S.J.

AUTHOR OF "GOD AND MYSELF" AND "THE HAND OF GOD"

Father Scott in CONVENT LIFE places the subject before his readers in a way that will enable them to understand it thoroughly; for he treats in his usual practical and convincing style all the aspects of the Life from the marks of a religious vocation to the ideal of the perfect Religious. Those deliberating a choice of life will regard CONVENT LIFE as invaluable; while Confessors as well as Religious Superiors will be grateful for the eminently practical aid which this volume affords, and for the clear common-sense advice which appeals so strongly to Americans for whom it is primarily written. Rev. Joseph M. Woods, S.J. of the Woodstock Theological Faculty, pronounces this to be the best work on the subject in the English language.

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J. F. Rowan S.J. 1927.

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The world shines bright for inexperienced eyes,
And death seems distant to the gay and strong,
And to the youthful heart proud fancies throng,
And only present good can nature prize.
How, then, shall youth o'er these low vapors rise
And climb the upward path, so steep and long?
And how, amid earth's sights and sounds of wrong,
Walk with pure heart and face raised to the skies?

By gazing on the Infinitely Good
Whose love must quell or hollow every other,
By living in the shadow of the Rood,
For He that hangs there is our Elder Brother,
Who, dying, gave to us Himself as food,
And His own Mother as our nursing Mother.

MATTHEW RUSSELL, S.J.

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PREFACE

IN THE UNITED STATES THERE are at present about a hundred thousand women who have consecrated their lives to religion as Sisters. That is a considerable army, the Red Cross of Christ. Every year thousands of young ladies enroll themselves under the standard of the religious life. Many people must, therefore, be interested in the sort of life to which the Sister dedicates herself. The present volume aims at putting the religious vocation before the public.

Most Catholics understand what the career of a Sister implies, but, nevertheless, desire to know a little more about it. Non-Catholics are interested to know what it is that attracts the choicest souls, year after year, to the sacrifice of all that people value most highly. It is hoped that the perusal of the following pages will give the solution of the mystery.

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I

THE CONVENT

CONVENT LIFE

I

THE CONVENT

THE WORD "CONVENT" MEANS an assembly, a coming together. In the ecclesiastical sense it means an assemblage of persons dwelling together in a religious house, to acquire perfection by means of the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience under the authority of a religious Superior. The establishment of a convent requires either Episcopal or Papal authorization.

The words "convent" and "monastery," although originally quite different in meaning, are now employed to express much the same thing. Generally, however, a convent refers to a religious establishment of women, while a monastery usually, but not always, indicates a place for men. The words "Nun" and "Sister" [1] are

[1] Ecclesiastically, Sisters are religious women with simple vows; Nuns are religious women with solemn vows.

now employed by people generally without any difference of meaning, although ecclesiastically they are quite distinct. This being a treatise for general readers, the terms "Nun" and "Sister" will be employed in their popular sense.

Convents are cloistered, and may be either enclosed, or unenclosed. The enclosed convents are those whose members are absolutely closed off from the outside world. The enclosed Sisters never leave the convent. Sisters of the unenclosed convents go in and out as their duties require. Those who live in convents are called Religious or a Religious Community. As applied to Nuns and Sisters, this term means that their lives are devoted exclusively to the service of religion.

Religious are said to lead an active life or a contemplative life, according as their special manner of living is devoted mostly to external works of mercy or to prayer. In former times, when Christian civilization was in formation and society was crude and vicious, the contemplative life dominated. Pious souls who wished to escape from the contagion of evil withdrew to the cloister, as a place of security and

prayer, and to do penance for the sins of the world. Later on, when woman's place in the world was made more secure, devout souls entered the convent as a place to sanctify themselves, in order to issue forth and do service to their fellow men for the love of Christ.

This service consisted in what is called nowadays, social service. Whatever a woman can do to give a helping hand to one in need, that is the work of the Sister. It may be rescue work among the fallen or unfortunate, or helping the poor, or nursing in hospitals and poor homes, or caring for orphans and the aged and the blind and the outcast. In times of war, the battlefield is their convent. Hence they are known as Angels of the Battlefield and Angels of Mercy. All this we shall dwell on later, in our chapters on the Red Cross Sisterhoods and the Social Service Sisterhoods. For the Red Cross, which is now the badge of mercy the world over, was the special insignia of the Religious Orders of Mercy as far back as the twelfth century.

Besides the Sisterhoods which devote themselves to contemplation and those that

give themselves to works of mercy, there are the Orders [1] wherein the members exercise the duties of both the active and the contemplative life. In the Contemplative Orders one of the essential duties is the recitation of the Divine Office in choir. Besides that duty they have many others, which are described under the chapter on Sisterhoods of Contemplation and Atonement. Some Active Orders have choir duty also. These Sisterhoods, by thus combining some of the main features of the Contemplative Orders with the duties of the Active Orders, are what is called Religious of mixed life. In modern times most of the Religious Orders belong to this last class.

In both the enclosed and unenclosed communities there are lay-Sisters, that is, Sisters who are not obliged to do choir duty. There are many religious souls who have not the education required to fulfil the duties of the choir Sisters, but who nevertheless yearn for a life of service and sanctity apart from the hindrance of the world. For such the lay-Sisterhood is open.

[1] The Canonical Code distinguishes between Institute, Order, Congregation etc. The word Order is used in this treatise in its popular meaning.

Before a convent is established, the permission of the bishop of the place is required. Except those convents which are immediately under Papal authority, all convents are subject to Episcopal jurisdiction. The bishop or his delegate may inspect them any time, and all the Nuns may have recourse to him whenever they see fit.

Everything in regard to convent life aims at giving the Sisters the latitude of the children of God. As we shall see in the body of this work, the fullest freedom is given the young woman who contemplates being a Sister. None but those who have applied for admission as a Sister can realize how difficult it is to be received. This will be shown in detail further on.

After admission they are called postulants, that is, they postulate or request to be admitted permanently. As postulants they live the life of the Sisters and see it in all its phases. During this time of postulancy, which lasts from six months to a year, they may leave any time without any formality.

After being postulants, they are received as novices into the Community. This

means that they enter more intimately into the life of the Sisters, but are not yet received as such. The novitiate, as this period is called, lasts usually a year. During this period the novice may leave any time without any formality whatsoever.

After the novitiate, they are permitted to take the religious vows for a specified time. Only after three years are they allowed to bind themselves permanently to the obligations of the Religious Life.

In the chapters wherein we consider the various classes of convents, will be found the manner of life lived therein. For the present, I give a general outline of the day as spent in the majority of convents which lead the mixed life of contemplation and charity. You will observe that there is not an idle moment in the day. The time spent in prayer and meditation is the most valuable, for it is from prayer that the Sisters receive that wonderful zeal and spirit of sacrifice which enable them to work so heroically for others.

ORDER OF TIME

5:00[1]	*Rise*
5:30	*Meditation*
6:30	*Recitation of Office*
6:45	*Mass*
7:30	*Breakfast*
7:45–11:45	*Occupations*
11:45	*Prayer*
12:00	*Dinner*
12:30	*Community Recreation*
1:30	*Recitation of Office*
2–6:30	*Occupations. In the course of the afternoon, one half hour of mental prayer and one half hour of spiritual reading. In the course of the day, the beads and visits to the Blessed Sacrament and on some days Benediction.*
6:30	*Supper*
7–8	*Community Recreation*
8:00	*Recitation of Office*
9:00	*Night Prayers*
9:15	*Retire.*

[1] In some Orders the hour of rising is 5.30 or 6, and less time is given to Meditation.

From the above it is seen that, with all their time for prayer and spiritual duties, the Sisters give over eight hours a day to various occupations These include teaching, nursing, visiting the sick and poor, and other works of mercy.

To give a further idea, in a general way, of the life of a Nun, I quote the following from the book of instructions of the Order of Mercy. These directions come under the head of General Principles.

"The Sisters should have great love and esteem for their vocation, considering God has chosen them, and has given them exceptional graces and means for advancing His glory and their own sanctification. We are ever to prefer the general to a particular good, so as to yield up willingly our own satisfaction and personal interest when there is question of accommodating one another, of rendering a service to the Community, or to an individual Sister.

"In our conduct we are to act with such moderation that by our manner, gait, words, looks and actions we may, on all occasions, show forth the virtues of true Religious and edify one another. Hence we are not to

perform our duties with precipitation, over-anxiety, confusion or noise, but endeavor habitually to keep ourselves in the presence of God.

"As each Sister is constantly to keep before her mind the necessity of aiming at the perfection of the religious state, she may be convinced that in presenting herself in prayer every morning and saying: 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me do?' that our Saviour will invariably answer: 'Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Me.'

"The grace of vocation, indicating God's special love for her, requires faithful co-operation on her part. She aims at adding the practice of the Counsels to the perfect fulfilment of the Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church.

"If, according to an old maxim, 'Virtue is acquired by frequent acts,' we may be well assured that it is preserved by the same means; namely, by the continuous exercise of those acts which, with God's grace, cause them to become a habit.

"The chief helps afforded the Sisters in the course of the year for the renewal of the spirit of fervor are:

"1. A retreat of eight days for prayer

and meditation, made during the summer vacation, when the Sisters, being called to the Mother House in the country, have the opportunity of recruiting their health and resting from the labors of the scholastic year, while renewing their spiritual strength.

"2. Our monthly recollections or brief retreats at the end of the month.

"3. The weekly ministry of the ordinary confessor, and of an extraordinary confessor four times a year.

"4. The spiritual exhortations in the chapel.

"5. The daily exercises and the frequent opportunity of spiritual reading during times of silence.

"6. Daily Communion.

"7. Frequent Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

"These and other innumerable blessings attached to the religious vocation are calculated to arouse in the Sisters a sense of gratitude, proved to be real by the fidelity with which they make use of them. They should have but one heart and one soul in Christ, their heavenly Spouse; and as their Divine Saviour has united them together in one religious body by the grace of their

vocation, so should they ever remain united in the spirit of charity, which is the 'Bond of Perfection.'"

These instructions give only a very general outline. As we take up, further on, the various classes of Orders and their works, we shall see more in detail the marvellous provision made for personal sanctity and for consequent service to others. For sanctity and service go together. For while it is true that much good is done by those who are not notably pious in the world, yet it is done at times only, or else along congenial lines, or to those in whom they are interested.

But the Sisters do good of all kinds to all classes and always. They go where they are sent and take up the kind of work that is assigned them. They never question their own likes or dislikes, but only the need there is for their service.

To do this, day in and day out, year after year unto old age or death, is not a natural inclination or choice, but a supernatural vocation. And when we reflect that this has been going on, not only occasionally but continuously, for hundreds

of years in the Catholic Church, we can readily see that it is a divine thing.

There is no glamour about the work and life, such as in war times attracts many good women to give their services to public helpfulness.[1] The career of a Sister is hidden. The eye of God alone beholds her services, her sacrifices, her weariness and her trials. The eye of God, and also the eyes of the poor unfortunates whose lives are made more livable by her ministrations. But God is their chief motive and their main witness. "What you do to the least of my brethren, that you do unto me."

Jesus Christ is not only a reality to them, but a constant companion. They love Him above the love of woman for man. Not only is He their Companion, He is their Friend; yea more, He is their Beloved. Christ is their Spouse. That explains the Sister's career of sacrifice. It is not hard to serve when one loves.

[1] All that is said in this chapter and the rest of the book about the Religious Life applies with proper modifications to the Religious Orders of men, also.

II

THOSE WHO ENTER

II

THOSE WHO ENTER

ON A CERTAIN OCCASION A NON-Catholic was heard to remark: "Where in the world do all the Sisters come from?" Not only to those outside the Church does this question suggest itself, but also to Catholics themselves.

You see the Sisters everywhere. They are caring for the old in homes for the aged, and watching over infants in foundling asylums. You will find them nursing the sick in hospitals, and binding up the wounds of soldiers on the battlefield. In schools and academies they are engaged in the education of youth, and in distant lands they help the missionary to civilize the savage.

Others devote their lives to the adoration of God in the Blessed Sacrament, to prayer, contemplation and charity. Some give their lives to penance and reparation for the sins of the world, which else might

call God's wrath upon mankind. Then there are those angels of restoration who seek the sheep that have strayed to bring them back into the fold, as did the Good Shepherd Himself in His days among men.

And where do they all come from? From everywhere and from every class and condition of society. In the convent you will find those who were rich and those who were poor, the educated and the simple, the aristocrat and the humble. That is what they were before entering; once in the convent, they are all Sisters, they form one family in Jesus Christ, they have all things in common, for which reason they are called a Community..

In most women there is an instinct for service to others. Witness the alacrity with which they join the Red Cross Society. See how others take to settlement work in the slums. Humanity urges them to sacrifice themselves for the welfare of others. What humanity inspires women to do occasionally, religion invites them to do as a career, for the love of Jesus Christ. Our Lord plainly declares that whatever we do unto others for His sake, we do unto Him.

Now there are certain souls who are drawn to Christ by the great love He has shown them. He became a little child for them, lived, suffered and died for them. If there were no heaven or no hell, they would love Him and serve Him in return for His love. They would delight to serve Him personally if He were on earth, as the holy women in the Gospel did, but that they cannot do.

However, they realize, from His own words, that service done to others for His sake is taken by Him as done to Himself, so they burn with a desire to work for and with Christ. By helping others, they are doing something unto Christ Himself. By prayer, adoration and penance, they are working with Him in saving the souls of men. By teaching, they are instructing little ones in the ways of the Kingdom of God and enlarging that Kingdom which He established on earth.

To work for and with Jesus Christ! That is the noblest motive for entering the convent, and it is the motive which actuates most of those who become Sisters. The personal love of Christ! Love for Christ stronger than human love; love of

Christ so strong that it has made the young, the beautiful, the rich, prefer it to all the love and luxury of the world; love so strong that it causes those who love father and mother more than all else to sacrifice that love unto the love of Christ; love so holy that, while it claims the whole heart, it yet makes the love for father and mother greater than it was before.

For the love of God does not destroy rightful love, but increases it and hallows it. The love of a woman for her husband does not lessen her love for her mother, but rather intensifies it. And so the love of the maiden for Christ, to whom she consecrates her heart and her life, serves to intensify her love for her dear ones. But for Christ's sake, to give Him proof of her love, she withdraws from what she loves most on earth.

These, therefore, are the noble souls who embrace the Religious Life; these are they who enter the convent. The call having come to them, they respond. Those who enter are the flower of maidenhood.

Some people think that those who renounce the world and family ties are heartless, but, on the contrary, it is because

they have such great heart that they enter the convent. It is usually the most loving daughter that obeys the call to the Religious Life. You would not say that a girl had no heart because she leaves father and mother to get married, and perhaps lives in a place far away from her parents. If the love for a man can make a girl suffer a separation like that, how much more should the love of Christ do it!

If you have been associated at any time with Sisters, you have found that they were the soul of kindness and consideration. Unless their hearts were big and generous, they could not lavish such tender affection on those entrusted to their care. How many a broken heart has found comfort in the sympathy of a Sister! How many women who formerly were pupils of the Sisters return to them in after life to share with them their joys and sorrows, and receive from them strength and peace!

So the girl who leaves all, even her own family, to enter the convent is not lacking in heart. But a call comes to her from heaven and she heeds it, even though it makes her heart bleed.

And that is the divinity of the Religious Life in the Catholic Church. It makes a girl do what is otherwise impossible. Unless the call were divine, unless the life were divinely sanctioned, it could not find a response, century after century, from the noblest and best women of Christianity.

For those who enter the convent are select souls. Whenever you hear of a girl going to be a Sister, you will also hear that she is the best, or one of the best, girls in the neighborhood. So often is this the case that some non-Catholics, and even poor samples of Catholics, will say: "What a pity that such a fine girl should waste her life in a convent."

These people unknowingly are paying a high compliment to the convent, for the best girls usually know what they are doing. Unless the convent represented the highest and noblest manner of life, it would not attract the finest of our young women. Those who consider that a life is wasted on entering the convent know not of what they speak.

Later on, we shall consider the daily life in the convent. Here, it will suffice to say that the busiest and most serviceable

body of women in the world are the Religious Communities.

From early morning until night, they are occupied either in preparing themselves for service to others or in performing that service. By leaving the world and entering the convent, they are like unto the seed cast into the ground which springs forth a hundredfold. The Sister comes forth after her consecration to do a woman's work in the world. This she does with a devotion and constancy which literally multiply her efficiency many fold.

Like a ship cleared for action, she has discarded everything that could hinder wholehearted service. Sacrifice becomes part of her life. The world becomes richer and nobler for her presence. The world in giving her up, or rather in parting with her, is like the merchant putting his money into business, not to lose it, but to receive it back abundantly. Invested money is not wasted. A religious vocation is not a loss to society. A Sister's is not a wasted life.

Even those who withdraw entirely from association with the world, and give themselves up to a life of penance and prayer in

a cloistered order, serve mankind. For by giving up all that men most cling to, they show the importance of salvation. By their life of mortification, they preach a sermon on the necessity of restraint in the Christian life. By giving up the world and its allurements, they illustrate our Lord's teaching: "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" Thus they not only make secure their own salvation, but they also help others in their efforts to save their souls.

Noble women, the most noble, are found in every walk of life. There are saintly mothers, wives and daughters. The best Sister is generally the daughter of the best mother. The mother's vocation was to do God's work in the family. She did not receive the call as her daughter did. Her convent is the home. But the daughter received the call and responded.

Those who enter the Religious Life, therefore, realize that they are called to it, and are so circumstanced that they can obey the call. The life presupposes first the qualifications, and then the divine inspiration.

Those who enter are of the same clay as others. They have the same human nature with its passions and inclinations, its virtues and defects. But feeling called to a higher life, they aim at curbing passion and cultivating virtue in a life devoted to service and sacrifice for Christ's sake. With Him as their model and leader, they endeavor to become more and more like Him on earth that they may be closer to Him for eternity. They have received from Him the invitation to draw near. Souls chosen from the multitude, they step out from the ranks of the great Christian army, and take their place close to Christ, the King, to serve by His side.

And how does this call come? Does God appear to the individual as He did to Saul on the way to Damascus? Or does His voice ring out as it did when it summoned the apostles to leave all and follow Him?

God has various ways of calling His beloved unto Him and His service. To some, indeed, He has appeared as evidently as in the case of the apostles. Some of the great saints and founders of Religious Orders, men and women, destined to ex-

ceptional service and suffering, have seen the Lord and heard His voice, but ordinarily it is not so.

The call to the Religious Life, or to be a Sister, comes in various ways. In some cases it is distinct and overpowering. In others, it is gentle, like a whispering breeze, and must be carefully listened to in order to be discerned. Some hear the call from childhood, and only wait the day that will enable them to obey it. Others get the summons suddenly, almost against their anticipations, but it comes so clearly that they hardly have a doubt about it.

Some are quietly and gently drawn, others overpoweringly, and still others hesitatingly. With these last, the attraction is there, but the repulsion also. They desire to make the sacrifice and yet tremble at the cost. The life appeals to their nobler nature, its sacrifices appall their weak humanity. Balanced thus between yes and no, the will eventually yields to grace, and often these vocations are the most meritorious and serviceable.

All that has been said so far is rather general. We shall now look more closely at the matter, and endeavor to go some-

what into detail. Many, very many, souls are concerned about this subject, so we shall try to be as plain and definite as possible.[1]

It is not enough to like a career in order to adopt it. One must consider the qualifications it calls for, as well as the attraction it has. If a girl experiences a strong attraction to the career of a Sister, the first thing to do is to consider if she has the needed qualities.

These depend on the nature of the Sisterhood in question. Some Religious Orders, on account of the service they render, require more and higher qualifications than others. A girl might feel drawn to a certain Order which requires a high standard of education for its work. If she has not a cultivated mind nor the capability of advanced knowledge, it is clear that her vocation is not to that particular Sisterhood.

The advantage of the religious vocation is that one who truly has it can find, from among the great variety of Communities, the one for which she is adapted. If one has not the requisites, mental or physical,

[1] These observations on vocation apply to men as well as women.

for any of the Sisterhoods, it means that one has not a vocation, no matter what the attraction may be. If God calls, He also fits one for the call.

But there is such a variety of Religious Communities, that few who feel the attraction to convent life need be discouraged, if only they are humble and docile and willing to embrace the life to which they are best adapted.

Some persons feel greatly attracted to a particular Order and to no other. But they have not got the qualifications for that Order. In that case they have no vocation. If only one Order appeals to them, but they are judged not to have the requirements for it, they have no vocation.

Sometimes women are attracted to an Order by friendship for some of its members. That does not mean that the vocation rests on that friendship. But such a vocation should be thoroughly tested. Again, some are attracted to the convent in the same way that a boy is drawn to a regiment. There is a certain idealism in it.

But there is not much romance on the battlefield or in the trenches, nor is there in the Sister's career, except in novels.

Sentimental persons thus often mistake a feeling of exaltation for a vocation. Such persons should be altogether discouraged. If the vocation be real, the discouragement will do no harm. If, on the other hand, it be imaginary, it is better to find it out before the step is taken rather than to retrace the step.

Emotional persons, as a rule, should not think of convent life. There is very little room for sentiment in the life of a Sister. It is hard, steady, monotonous work, but work made precious and sublime by the love of Christ, for whom it is done.

I do not mean to say that sentiment plays no part in Religious Life. It does, and a very great part, but always dominated by strength of character and solid motives. The kind of sentiment that should be discouraged is that which is found in very temperamental persons. It is a form of nervousness. A nervous person should not consider a religious career — without consulting an experienced physician.

We see, therefore, that those who enter the convent are they who desire to lead a life of sacrifice and service for the love of

Christ. Moreover, they have the qualifications, mental and physical, for the life, and they feel called to it.

There are many souls who are not satisfied with doing only what is obligatory. They desire to distinguish themselves by service in the cause they love. We see this in a nation's life. There are posts of danger and sacrifice which nobler souls eagerly seek.

As among men, and for the welfare of a people, there are exceptional souls who think not of their own advantage, but seek the common good, so in the Kingdom of Christ there are those who, for the welfare of souls and for the glory of the Kingdom of God, sacrifice what is dearest to them on earth. They do not throw themselves away any more than the man who goes "over the top" throws himself away. Sacrifice is never lost. Every sacrifice that is united to His Sacrifice, who gave all for love of us, bears fruit a hundredfold.

It is only in eternity that we shall see the value and meaning of a Sister's career. Here, it is patience, prayer, charity, benevolence, service and suffering. Hereafter,

it is the participation of heaven's best joys as the beloved of Jesus Christ. It is the nuptials of the faithful bride to her Spouse, Christ. It is sharing the very life of God forever.

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III

WHY THEY ENTER

III

WHY THEY ENTER

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTER, WE have considered who they are that enter convents. We saw that it is from among the noblest souls that the army of Sisters is recruited. In a general way, we also saw why they made the great sacrifice. We shall now consider more in detail what the motive is and on what it is based.

The convent life is a career of special service in the religion of Jesus Christ. Those who embrace it leave all to follow Christ. Our Lord Himself is the founder of this life of special service. The apostles, who left all to follow Him, were the first ones to hear and respond to the call of Christ.

Our divine Lord names two distinct classes of service in His Kingdom on earth. The first is contained in that statement of His: "If thou wilt enter into life everlasting, keep my commandments" (Matt.

19:17). That is the great army of Christians who seek, by keeping God's law, to save their souls. The second is proclaimed by these words: "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all thou hast and come follow me (Matt. 19:21). The apostles received that invitation and left all to be the companions of Jesus. The rich young man in the Gospel received it, but did not heed it.

From that day to this, the call has struck the ears of millions, and millions have heeded it. Others have heard it, but the voice of the world was louder, and they paid no attention to it. Jesus has declared: "He who loses his life for my sake shall find it." These words mean just what they say. That is why the apostles said to Christ: "Behold we have left all things and have followed thee" (Matt. 19: 27.) Later they gave their lives for Him.

Again, our Lord says: "Everyone that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my Name's sake shall receive an hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. 19: 29). It was perhaps because St. Matthew heard those words

that he acted as he did in the incident related by St. Luke. "After these things, Jesus went forth and saw a publican named Levi, sitting at the receipt of customs, and He said to him: Follow me, and leaving all things, he rose up and followed him" (Luke 5: 27).

A vocation to the convent life, or, as it is commonly called, the Religious Life, implies first of all a special calling. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you; and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit" (John 15: 16). In the last chapter we dwelt on that call. Suffice it to say now that it is a more or less distinct attraction to a life of service and sacrifice for the love of Christ. That summons may be cultivated into a ripened vocation, or it can be neglected or rejected.

As a rule, those who are called are persons whose lives give evidence of holiness. From early years, nature and grace have been fitting them for their sublime career. For such, the entrance into the convent is almost a natural transition. Others have had little thought of convent life, and have led ordinary worldly lives, but

some person or event has caused them to think seriously of spiritual things. In this attitude of mind, they hear the call which hitherto they had failed to discern.

Sometimes it is to seek a refuge from the sinful atmosphere of the world that induces souls to enter the convent. But this very desire to avoid sin is evidence that such souls are devoted to God. In seeking a haven from sin, they desire to show our Lord their earnestness in His service.

But unless a person who enters the convent is animated by personal love for Christ, and is prepared to do and suffer for Him, the Religious Life will be well nigh impossible. The principle and the foundation of the Religious Life is, therefore, a personal love for our Lord and the manifestations of it by doing what He counsels, but does not command. God commands all men to keep His law. To that there is no exception. He invites some to follow His counsels. Those who love Him greatly, and are qualified by circumstances, may receive this invitation.

I say qualified by circumstances, for there is the vocation to various other kinds of life as well as to the religious. God

wants good fathers and mothers in the world. Their love of Christ may be just as strong as that found inside the convent. But their vocation is along another path.

St. Joachim and St. Ann were great saints, filled with the love of God, and in His designs the ones chosen to be the parents of the Blessed Virgin. Blanche, the mother of St. Louis of France, gave to the world a model ruler and king, and was herself a saint. St. Monica gave to the Church its great Bishop and theologian, St. Augustine. This saintly mother of a saint is a type of high sanctity in the Christian home.

The Church of God sanctifies every state and condition of life. It is not the kind of life that makes the saint, but the manner of living it. But, other things being equal, the Religious Life offers ways and means of sanctification, service and sacrifice which no other career in life presents. Men and women in every walk of life rise by their efforts to heroic sanctity, but what is occasional in other careers and attended with difficulties is the rule in the Religious Life and accompanied with every manner of help.

The convent life may be called a school for saints. It is impossible to persevere as a faithful Sister without becoming a saint; not necessarily a proclaimed saint in the liturgy of the Church, but a true saint, nevertheless, in the eyes of God and the Court of Heaven. And in due time, the faithful Sister will be proclaimed a saint also.

For on that day when the whole world is rated, not by man, but by God Himself, she, in particular, will hear these words from Him: "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you cared for me; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee, thirsty and gave thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and sheltered thee, or naked and covered thee; or when did we see thee sick or in prison and came to thee? And the king answering shall say: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Come, ye

blessed of my Father, and possess the kingdom prepared for you."

Then will the faithful Sister rejoice that she spent her life in service for Christ. What matter the long hours of work, the ingratitude, the misunderstandings, the trials, the hardships, the separation from dear ones, the struggles and the temptations, — for all these have passed, but their fruit remains unto life everlasting.

In life, the faithful Sister does not think of reward. Her recompense is to serve for love. But not a prayer nor a sigh nor a pang has escaped her Beloved. The routine work of teaching, of caring for orphans, or the sick or the aged, everything she has done in her crowded life has been recorded in letters of gold for all heaven to read. The hours she spent in prayer to praise God, to convert souls, to sanctify herself, give place to an eternity of blessedness so great that it is not given to mortal tongue to express it. But above all, as in life she chose Christ for her Spouse, so at the end He claims her as His bride.

That is why so many of our best and noblest souls enter the convent. It is not, as some say, because of a love affair, al-

though God may use even that as an occasion to urge His call and to give that peace which the world cannot give nor take away. It is not because they cannot marry, for most of those who enter the convent are the most sought after because of their loveliness and goodness. It is not because they are wicked and need reform; for although there is place even for these, those who enter the convent are mostly lilies of virtue.

No, the reason they enter is because they get the invitation and heed it. And they heed it because they love the Son of God, who for their sake left His Father in heaven and was born in a stable. Their reply to His love is to give Him a proof of theirs. They, in imitation of Him and for love of Him, leave home and father and mother and dear ones and all that human nature craves, and make a sacrifice of themselves and all they have, because they want to give the supreme proof of love.

It is only a divine religion that can inspire such devotion and such heroism. Done as it is, century after century, not by a few but by millions, not under emo-

tional excitement but calmly, deliberately, with no earthly inducements, but with every earthly obstacle, it is a sign from heaven that the life is divine, and that the Church which fosters it is the Church of God.

IV

HOW THEY ENTER

IV

HOW THEY ENTER

HAVING SEEN THAT THOSE WHO enter the convent do so generally out of personal love for Christ, we shall next consider the steps one takes to enter.

We must bear in mind that love shows itself in sacrifice. Love that does not include service and suffering is not real. The young woman, therefore, who entertains the idea of convent life is prepared to meet obstacles of all kinds. And as a rule she needs to be. Some, it is true, seem to glide right into the Religious Life. Instead of obstacles, they meet with encouragement and God-speed from all sides.

Some parents realize that the highest honor God can confer upon them is to choose a child of theirs for His own special service. No matter what it costs to part with a dear one, they gladly consent to the separation, even though it rends their hearts. Parents who give a son to the service of

their country in time of war feel the parting, but nevertheless do it with patriotic pride. So, in giving a child to the service of God, the true Catholic father and mother rejoice, even though they suffer keenly by the separation.

But others there are who do not find the path to the convent at all smooth. Sometimes the difficulty arises from opposition in the family, sometimes from obstacles of environment and occasionally from the convent itself. As a rule, a true vocation overcomes all obstacles. Opposition serves to strengthen the determination to carry out the purpose.

An ordinary obstacle is the misplaced love of parents for their child. If a girl sets her mind on a worldly career, parents usually facilitate her plans, if the career is honorable. If a good marriage offers itself, fathers and mothers willingly make every sacrifice for the welfare of their daughter. If the man lives at a distance and it is certain that after marriage their child will be far away from them and for a long time, they put no obstacles in the way. They say, and rightly, that their love for her must not be selfish, and that

consequently they should not stand in the way of her happiness.

Why then should they stand in the way of her happiness if, instead of a man, she takes Christ for her Spouse? But they do, nevertheless; that is, some parents do, who consider that the convent life robs them of their child and robs her of her happiness and usefulness. But a woman's happiness is known to herself best, and if she finds it in the dedication of herself to God, why should it be interfered with? And certainly no Sister has a less useful career than a matron.

If it is, therefore, the child's happiness they consult, and the usefulness of her life, they should facilitate her noble purpose. But they do not in some cases. Perhaps it is because they shrink from the idea that their daughter is to have a life of hardship and privation. But suppose it is because of the very hardship and privation that it is chosen! Anyone can give an ordinary proof of love, but they who are called to the Religious Life are not actuated by ordinary love of God, and no ordinary proof will satisfy them.

They want to do big things for Christ,

things that count. He did wonderful things to show His love for them, and they want to do grand things for Him. He gave His life for them. They cannot lay down their lives for Him, but they can die to the world and to themselves for His sake. They can offer Him a living sacrifice, which in His sight is the equivalent of death, and He takes it as a fulfilment of His own words: "Greater love than this no man hath, than that he should lay down his life."

By the vows of the Religious Life the Sister strips herself of all attachment to the things of earth just as effectually as could be done by death. Terrible, you say. Sublime, I say, — divine! We admire heroism in men and women when displayed in a human cause, — why not admire it in a divine cause? Should not God inspire at least as much devotion as country? Rather, should we not expect more!

And we find more and greater. An army of silent heroines give their life's blood in the cause of Christ generation after generation. With no applause of an admiring world to urge them on, with

no blare of trumpets to call them forward, with no record of their deeds in human annals to give them cheer, they nevertheless do their work heroically, hidden as it were in the trenches, seen only by God, and feeling reward enough that they are doing their bit for Him.

Napoleon once said when someone complimented him on the devotion of his soldiers: "You do not know what devotion means. Look at Jesus Christ. He alone receives devotion. Dead and buried though He was centuries ago, dying a malefactor's death, He nevertheless, at this distance of time, has more devoted followers than the greatest living monarch. I am served because I compel and reward and lead to victory. Jesus Christ is served out of pure love."

If, then, a girl is drawn by this love of Christ, and prefers it to the love of man, is it kindness on the part of parents to thwart it? Rather, is it not ignorance or selfishness or a mistaken idea of the girl's happiness?

The young woman who meets with this obstacle of parental opposition suffers keen anguish. In overcoming the opposition

she must oppose those she loves. That makes the struggle very hard indeed. But it is often the first step. She realizes, however, that her Beloved is beholding her and that He knows what she is suffering because of Him, and that gives her joy and courage. Eventually God's grace triumphs, and she enters the convent with a victory won even before she has joined the ranks.

Environment sometimes occasions obstacles to a vocation. A girl may have a very strong desire and determination to become a Sister, but she is so situated that she cannot carry it out. While things are that way she has no choice. If God wants her, He will in His own way make it feasible for her to answer the call.

A girl's first duty is to her parents. If they really need her, her place is with them. Sometimes an elder sister must care for younger children. Her duty is to be a mother to them. No matter what the convent attraction may be, her vocation at the time is to look after her brothers and sisters.

How many noble girls struggle on in silence and devotion under such circum-

stances, and, at last, when the way is clear, take the step which was uppermost in their minds. It requires real heroism to persevere that way. Those who have been schooled thus frequently prove to be of incalculable help to others later on.

Again, it may be ill health that proves to be an obstacle. The convent life requires strength of mind and body. Many an ardent soul has aspirations for a life of sacrifice, but not the physical requirements. But the sacrifice asked by God is the one most acceptable. They who watch and wait also serve. God sees the heart, and if He finds that it belongs to Him, He may see fit to accept the sacrifice of desire only. Frequently, however, even the obstacle of ill health is overcome, and the valiant woman goes forth to join the standard of Christ.

Of course, there are all kinds of obstacles to a religious vocation, but in the end they only serve to strengthen it. The call of pleasure, of independence and of luxury sounds loud in the ear of the prospective Sister. They who enter the convent are not of different flesh and blood from the rest. Their love of life, liberty and luxury

is as strong and perhaps stronger than that of others, but their love of Christ is stronger still. The call of Christ rings out louder than that of the world, and the girl who obeys it knows that in doing so she is giving up everything her heart craves most, but she gives all gladly as a bridal token to her Beloved.

Once the mind is made up that the convent is her place, what is the next step? Of course it is understood that she has all along prayed and consulted her confessor and lived a devotional life. Before one thinks seriously of the convent, one should acquaint one's confessor and be guided by his directions. Self-guidance in this delicate and momentous matter is out of the question.

But presupposing this guidance and approval, the one who desires to enter a convent should consider which Order of Sisters she should join. Usually this goes apace with vocation. When one thinks of a convent, one usually has in mind some special convent and a particular Order.

Most often the seed of vocation is sown by the edifying and serviceable life of the Sisters whom one observes in one's own

experience. That is why a Religious Order in any particular place receives many vocations from that particular locality. However, it often happens that a girl brought up under a certain Sisterhood has received a vocation, not to that Order, but to some other with which she has never been associated.

The vocation is to a life of service and sacrifice for the love of Christ. The particular kind of service and sacrifice will depend on the individual. In the Catholic Church, the diversity of Orders offers a choice to almost every kind and quality of person. In general, they are divided into two classes, the contemplative, devoted mostly to prayer and reparation, and the mixed, given to a life both of prayer and activity.

Most of the Orders today come under the second class. With several hours of prayer each day, they also bestow their time on the education of youth, the care of the sick in hospitals, and other such like works of mercy in behalf of the poor and helpless. The Sisters have orphan asylums, homes for the aged, foundling asylums, hospitals, sanatoriums for the

feeble-minded, convalescent homes, city homes for working girls, reformatories for unfortunate women and girls, etc., etc. There is no need of society that is not supplied in one form or another by these devoted women. Most of our parish schools are taught by them. They have many academies and boarding schools and not a few colleges for women.

There is therefore a wide range of choice for the prospective Sister. If she wants to devote her life to nursing the sick, there are Orders devoted to that. Does she want to care for infants or children or the aged? Sisterhoods are established for just that work. Has she talent and inclination for teaching? There are Orders devoted to that exclusively. Orders which reach out to rich and poor, high and low, the slums and the palace, are to be found everywhere.

Or does she feel a call to adore her God by constant prayer and worship of the Blessed Sacrament, a life of praise and thanksgiving to Him for His mercies unto mankind and of reparation for the ingratitude of the world? If so, there are the Contemplative Orders.

Moreover, in many Orders there are lay-Sisters whose duty it is to facilitate the work of the choir Sisters. It often happens that very good, devout women desire to be Sisters, but fear that they have not got the necessary education, etc., for the Order to which they are attracted. Suppose the Order of their choice is devoted to education or the recitation of the Divine Office. Unless one has a good education one cannot qualify as a choir Sister for such an Order. But one can qualify for it as a lay-Sister.

The lay-Sister is every bit as much a true Sister as a choir Sister. She takes the vows and assumes the duties of the convent rule in the same way as the other Sisters. The only difference is in the kind of duties that are performed. The lay-Sister attends to the ordinary duties of the convent which the other Sisters would have to be occupied with were it not for the lay-Sisters. In this way, the teaching Sisters and the choir Sisters have the opportunity of devoting themselves entirely to duties which they alone can perform.

The lay-Sisters thus participate in all

the good work of the other Sisters just as truly as if they were doing it themselves, because if it were not for them, the choir Sisters could not do their work with the same satisfaction. Just as in an army there must be those who supply the soldiers who do the fighting, so in a Religious Order there must be some who assist those who do the teaching and other special work.

A soldier who carries messages and supplies ammunition is as much a soldier as the one who uses the weapons of war. And the lay-Sister, without whose help the other Sisters would not be able to do their tasks advantageously, is as much a Sister as those who teach and recite the office and discharge other duties of a similar nature.

Indeed, a good lay-Sister has the opportunity of gaining as much merit as the most distinguished and successful choir Sister. For God regards not the work, but the spirit in which it is done. The lay-Sister who by her toil relieves the other Sisters from household duties, and does so for the love of God, shares in all the work done by them just as truly as if

she did it herself. And God regards it in that way.

On account, therefore, of the existence of this branch of the Sisterhood, there is no one who feels the call to be a Sister who needs to feel discouraged. Some of the greatest saints of Religious Orders have been lay-Sisters.

When one has settled on the Order one wishes to join, one should not hesitate to speak to the Superior or a Sister of that Order in the nearest convent. Even if one has not settled definitely on the Order, it is advisable to have a talk with a Sister. You need not be afraid that they will want you for their own Order.

Of course they desire the good and the extension of their own Community, but never at the expense of an unfit subject. No matter how hard you tried to enter a certain Order, and no matter how much it was in need of subjects, unless you had the marks of a religious vocation and were fully qualified for their life, they would not consider you.

A good talk with a convent Superior will help you more than you can realize. Mostly the Superiors of convents are rocks

of common sense, and besides have all the tenderness of a mother.

After these preliminaries, one should pray and consult with one's confessor, and then act as directed by him. A priest always fosters a vocation, but never forces one. As a rule, he knows you better than you know yourself. If, therefore, you have his approval, and you feel in your heart that you wish to give the supreme proof of love to your Lord, go forward to the House of God and the Gate of Heaven.

V

BEFORE ENTERING

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A YOUNG WOMAN, CONVINCED in a general way that her vocation is to the convent life, usually talks the matter over with some Sister in whom she confides. The Sister will advise her to have a good heart-to-heart talk with her confessor. Of course, before she entertained the idea of convent life at all, she had the advice and general approval of her confessor. However, before taking the all-important step, she usually goes over the matter seriously and in detail with her spiritual adviser.

Some people fancy that priests make a business of sending girls to the convent. They believe that as soon as asked about it they urge the inquirer to take the religious veil. Nothing could be further from the fact. A priest realizes that a vocation is a calling from God, and before he gives a deciding word, he makes sure that the girl is truly called to the life of a

Sister. Anyone who has had experience will recall how slow and careful the priest was before giving his judgment.

Many enthusiastic aspirants to the Religious Life are amazed that the priest, or the Superior of a convent, fails to share their enthusiasm. A vocation is a two-sided affair. It is not enough to desire to be a Sister; one must be chosen for it by God Himself. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you." So a priest, who knows very well what are the characteristics of a true vocation, proceeds slowly and judiciously in his consideration of the particular case before him.

First, he considers the character and temperament of the woman. He knows the demands of the convent life, and often, after a short interview, perceives the incompatibility of the inquirer's personality with the career of a Sister.

If the character, however, should be suited to the life, he next proceeds to look into the motive of the aspirant. "Just why do you want to become a Sister?" he may begin with. He learns from herself the reason. Sometimes she is not able to formulate her motive. In a confused way

she feels an attraction to the career of a Sister, but cannot analyze her mind. He may proceed to help her by asking how long she has had the desire of being a Sister.

As she goes on to narrate the occasion and the time of her vocation, he perceives very clearly what her motive is. Usually, it is a strong desire to belong entirely to God and to do something for Him. Sometimes a girl is attracted by the æsthetic element of convent life. It appeals to her refined nature, — that quiet, decorous, holy and serviceable career. The priest is quick to point out that all is not gold that glitters, and that behind the genteel and honorable life of a Sister there is the severe self-discipline of sanctity. He shows her, moreover, that most of the Sister's career is a life hidden in Christ, that it abounds in privation and restrictions, and that it is characterized by routine.

After pointing out the difficulties and sacrifices of the life, he will also show that for the true lover of Christ these are attractions. What a glory it is to be associated with God in His work for men's souls! What a favor to be chosen by Him for special service! What an honor

to be able to offer to God Himself something that is very acceptable to Him!

He may show, by way of example, how honored men feel when they are asked by the ruler of their country to accept some post of trust. They are glad to encounter difficulties and to make sacrifices for the honor of serving their country in a post of distinction. The Religious Life is a career of distinction in the Kingdom of Christ. But above all it is an opportunity of showing great love for Jesus Christ.

For most aspirants to the convent life the love of Christ is the dominant factor. Unless the priest sees good indications of that personal love of God, he is slow to give his approval to a vocation.

True, certain souls are drawn to the convent for the security it affords against temptation. That is often but an apparent motive, for the very reason why they desire to avoid the occasion of sin is because they love God and fear to offend Him. It is a good motive, but not the best. The requirements of the Religious Life are such that love is the motive that makes all things easy and feasible. If you love, nothing is hard.

The priest is careful to point out that any merely natural motive will not sustain a vocation. The life of a Sister is supernatural, and it must have supernatural nourishment for its maintenance. Once a Sister falls back on human motives, her career is broken and lost. The aspirant should understand that thoroughly. If she goes to the convent to please somebody, or to have a life free from responsibility, or from any selfish or human motive, she will not last. It is better not to go at all than to go except for real spiritual reasons.

All this the priest will say to the inquirer if he perceives that her motives do not seem to be right. He does that not to discourage, but to enlighten and assist her, and to make her see that she is committing herself to a very serious undertaking.

It may happen that after the interview the priest may not be able to make up his mind about the vocation. Some things favor it, others discourage it. He may advise the girl to go regularly to confession for some time, and then talk it over with him again later on. Or, if he fears

that may discourage her, he may tell her to pray and to wait a while longer.

The priest does not want to discourage a true vocation nor to encourage a false one. If he cannot decide either way after a suitable time, and the girl is very anxious to enter the convent, he may advise her to do so. That is one of the reasons for the novitiate. Every convent has a novitiate, a place where those who wish to join the Order are prepared for the duties of the life, and also where they have their vocation tested.

The Religious Order endeavors to proceed just as carefully as the priest in the matter of vocation. No Order wants a subject who will not be suitable, and that for the subject's sake as well as the Order's. In the novitiate the aspirant gets a taste of the Religious Life, her qualifications are weighed, and her acceptance or rejection is decided upon.

You see, therefore, that there is no haste nor superficiality about a religious profession. But, spite of all examination and inspection and solicitude, it may happen that a subject may, after a time, find that the life is not the one she considered it to

be and that she is not suitable for it. In that case, with all kindness and consideration, she is informed that she has no vocation. She is advised to be very candid, and not to continue the life out of regard for what friends or relatives may think.

If, after the period of the novitiate, she finds the life suitable, and the Order finds her desirable, she is admitted into the convent proper. It will thus be seen that it is harder to get into the convent than to get out of it. Outside the Church, misinformed persons sometimes believe that the convent is a trap to catch innocent victims. Let them try to be caught in the trap. That will be the best refutation of their statements.

We occasionally hear of escaped Sisters in big headlines or by a loud scandal-preacher. Those escaped Sisters, you will find, found it easier to leave the convent than they would find it to get back again. In fact, all the king's horses and all the king's men could not put them behind convent walls.

There are certain Sisterhoods whose purpose is to reclaim fallen girls. Like the Good Shepherd Himself, they seek after

the foolish sheep that have strayed from virtue's path. These Christ-like women devote their lives to the most repulsive class of womankind. With such splendid results do they work for them that frequently the unfortunate girl who was committed to their guardianship by the courts blesses God that she was sent to their establishment.

Enemies of the Church sometimes point to these poor unfortunate inmates of an institution as examples of Sisters detained against their will. They are no more Sisters than the prisoners in a jail are the authorities in charge of it. It is an instance of how the Church and her holy institutions are not infrequently misunderstood, even as was our Lord Himself. Of all the sublime, disinterested lives on earth, can anything higher be conceived than that of those refined, delicate, saintly women who consecrate their lives to the outcasts of society? If prejudice and hatred occasionally brand those Sisters, they are not surprised or alarmed, for they recall how Jesus Himself was accused as a drinker and a disturber, and eventually as a malefactor.

Not everyone in the convent is a saint, but there are more saints within convent walls than in the same space anywhere else on earth. Although all may not be saints, it is not the fault of the convent nor the Order. The Religious Life is a state of perfection. It supplies abundantly all that tends to holiness. But sanctity is a personal matter. Neither monastery nor cowl makes the monk, but the life of imitation of Jesus Christ.

That is always kept before the Sister. Jesus is her Model and her Leader. By meditating daily on His life, she grows more and more like the Model, and by degrees acquires His spirit. We have all seen it in the Sisters, — that wonderful benignity and charity which so well suit their mission.

Like Christ, their service is to humanity, not to themselves. By prayer, they draw down grace from heaven into the desert of men's lives, and cause to blossom there the flowers of virtue. By instruction in the class-room, they fit our youth not only for life's requirements, but also and especially for life everlasting. In prisons and hovels they bring cheer and hope to

those on whom the world disdains to look. In hospital wards they minister like angels to the bodies and souls of men. The abandoned child is picked up by them and nourished unto useful manhood. The aged, whose own disown them, find in them daughters more tender and devoted than nature gave them.

And so, wherever there is work to be done, there you will find the Sisters. Often their only recompense is ingratitude. For that is a way which not infrequently people have of repaying service. But the Sisters are not looking for gratitude, but for service and sacrifice.

And that is why the priest, whose advice is asked, is so careful to find out if the aspirant to this sublime life has the right motive to engage in it. That is why the Religious Order is so painstaking in the acceptance of subjects. For the life calls for sublime self-renunciation. Disinterestedness is demanded day in and day out. Selfishness cannot thrive in convent soil.

"If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me." A hard message, you say. But not to one who loves.

VI

WITHIN

VI

WITHIN

CONVENT LIFE IS NOT A ROmance, the stage nun and the novel nun notwithstanding. Service and sacrifice, that is the standard. "If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself, take up thy cross and follow me." No romance there.

Looked at from a distance, the Sister is very romantic. But there is not much romance in rising at dawn and working hard, unseen of others mostly, until night, and then the same thing over again the next day, the next week, the next year, and so on to the end. Very little romance, that. But it is done for Jesus Christ. That transforms it, that really makes it romance, for the soul that loves. Without personal love for Jesus Christ, the convent life would be prison. With the love of Jesus in the heart, it is paradise.

The Nun has a small room, if she has a room at all. Sometimes she has only a

bed, alcoved in a large dormitory, filled with other beds, alcoved like her own. But as most of the day is spent in common with the other Sisters, in what is called community life, the bed and the room do not matter, except, of course, that one's privacy is sacrificed. For some, that is a cross to bear, one of the many.

Then they all dress alike, eat alike, recreate alike. That is hard on most people, at least for a time. Individuality is sacrificed, — another cross. Some find that the hardest. Nothing is so congenial to us as our own likes and dislikes. But all that is given up by this community life. You are one of many, not one apart as you were before entering.

Then a bell rings you out of bed, calls you to prayer, summons you to meals, and orders you to work. You may not feel like getting up, praying, eating or working, but the bell rings, and you rise, pray, eat, work. Cross number three. You are no longer your own master. But you bear in mind that He who was Lord and Master became obedient for you. So you are glad to say to Christ, your Beloved: "This, my Jesus, I offer to Thee for love

of Thee." And you feel happy that you can give Him something that costs you a lot. For anything worth while costs. Cheap gifts may be all right for ordinary persons, but not for your love, Christ.

Then again there is your company. Perhaps you will like your companions, perhaps you will not. There is no choice. Outside, if you did not like a person or a group, you could keep away. Not so in the convent. For better or for worse you take those around you. Cross number four, and a big one. By entering a convent, you do not change your nature. Some persons are likeable, others are not. Some are likeable to some and not to others. In the convent, likeable or unlikeable, it is all the same; there you are and there you have to make the most of it.

But then you reflect that, after all, the companions of Jesus were not so very likeable. Judas was not much to love. Some of the others were not the best of company to the refined Jesus. "But He bore all that for me, and I can do something similar for Him," the good Nun says. And that makes her happy. A bit of romance, if you like.

So she takes her companions as they are, and they take her as she is. That is community life. A great saint said it was his greatest hardship. For the Religious Orders of men are in the essentials the same as those of women.

We all have our pet weaknesses. One likes this, another that. Perhaps it is in food or dress or amusement. In the convent, there are no such pets, — the same for all. Only illness makes an exception, when nothing that the convent has is denied the patient. But, ordinarily, one shares just what the others have. That makes quite a cross.

The way of the cross has been called the royal road to heaven. You will find that royal road in the convent. But do not get frightened. I am pointing out the crosses first in order that you may have no delusions about the Religious Life. There are compensations, — a peace which the world cannot give. But I have not finished with the cross yet.

You may like certain work and consider you have a special aptitude for it. Your superiors may judge otherwise. Or it may be that they need you for some kind of

duty which you can, indeed, perform, but which you naturally dislike. You may be assigned to that very duty. However, the words of Christ come to you: "If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself." Realizing that self-denial is a sort of sacrificial knife, you bear the wound it inflicts cheerfully, reflecting that Christ was wounded all over for you.

But the hardest trial that may come to one in the convent is to be misunderstood. And that may happen. It is hard to be misunderstood by your companions, but bearable, if your Superior understands you. But suppose the Superior does not understand you! That indeed is rare, but it has happened. That is perhaps the greatest cross of all. God sometimes allows it, even to the best Religious. Suffering makes us dear to Him, and one of His greatest sufferings was that He was misunderstood. The Nun who experiences that anguish has a good share of the Cross of Christ, and a big place in the Heart of Christ.

But are not Nuns awfully nice persons, and most delightful and charitable and contented? Oh, yes. How, then, can anything not pleasant occur with such com-

panionship? It is human nature. Very nice people and very charitable people often have very different points of view. Differences of temperament, education and environment may cause one to be quite at variance with another. In your own home, how frequently do you find differences and difficulties, between various members of the family. And yet they all love one another and are considered to be good and kindly.

"But it should be different with Nuns," you say, "they are all so holy and considerate." Well, the convent is one big family, and among so many, living intimately together, there are bound to be incompatibilities.

And now I am coming to the heart of the matter, and indeed to the basis of convent life. If everything were ideal in the convent life, it would be paradise. The Nun would have her heaven here instead of hereafter. But the Religious Life is service and sacrifice. These two do not go well together with heavenly bliss. They lead to it. They are the ladder to the Kingdom of Heaven, but a ladder that must be climbed step by step, and often

with weariness and pain. But heaven is at the top. That cheers. That sustains.

Life is a warfare. Scripture insists on that. But so many fight, and bleed, and lose. The Religious indeed must fight and bleed, but she wins. That is her great incentive, her great peace. Victory is sure. She is in no doubtful campaign. Christ is her Leader and her Lord. With Him and for Him she goes on to certain triumph.

How glorious to bleed for Him! St. Theresa, in her exaltation, cried out: "Aut pati, aut mori," "O Lord, if I cannot suffer for Thee, let me die." What terrors can sacrifice have for those who seek it? What pain is there in suffering for those who pray for it? Of course not all Sisters reach the heights climbed by Theresa, but they follow in her path. They have the same Lord to love and to serve, and they realize that no field of service equals that on which they are engaged.

You may say that such a picture of convent life is rather repelling. Not to those who love. That is why convent life is impossible without the right motive. A mother who loves a sick child does not find the labor and watching a task. Another

might, but not the mother. Love makes it all sweet. And so love of Christ makes the monotony and hardship and privation of the convent sweet to the Nun. She did not join the Community for reward here. She does not expect her heaven here. But nevertheless she enjoys peace and happiness such as the world cannot give.

And now I come to consider the wonderful consolations and peacefulness and joys of convent life There is, first, the abiding assurance of doing something worth while in life, and for the right motive. How many people of the world toss about from this to that, merely existing, and after years of service, willing or unwilling, have nothing to show for the years. Often seeking self only in what they do and not even succeeding in that, they go on from year to year empty handed to the end. They suffer, yes, often more than is imagined, but their suffering is frequently lost in unworthy pursuits.

The assurance a Nun has that all she does counts is no small source of comfort. For she is doing not her own will, seeking not her own self, but under the will of her

Superior she is doing what God wants, working for Him, her Lord and Love. Moreover, all she does is of service to the world, genuine service. Whether educating youth, or nursing in hospitals, or visiting the poor, or comforting the sorrowful, she is doing good to others. She sees that her life is filled with helpful service unto others and for His sake for whom she does it all. That is a wonderful career. That is a life worth while.

Then, there is that other assurance so full of peacefulness, that God cannot be outdone in generosity. She knows that her labor and sacrifice are working out a glorious eternity for her. If keeping the commandments merits eternal life, what must be in store for those who go further and observe the counsels of Christ! If the souls saved by the ministry of the Church enter eternal life, what must be the nature of that eternity for those who aid Christ in that ministry! By prayer, charity and virtue the Nun prepares the soil in countless souls for the reception of God's grace. Many a sinner has been turned from the evil path by the ministrations of a devoted and edifying Nun.

Then, there is the peace of life which is found nowhere else, the peace of belonging to the household of Christ. For to the Nun, Jesus is very near. He is constantly at her side. To Him she speaks out her heart. To Him she offers her little troubles and her big trials. And since He accepts them, she is comforted and happy. That is why the Nuns always look so cheerful and peaceful, — and so young. I remember a Sister who died at the age of seventy-two. All along I thought she was about fifty. Her heart was young, and really one is not much older than one's heart.

But the grand, central, dominating factor in a Nun's life, the one that really makes her career sublime and her character lightsome, is that she has the love of Jesus Christ. She knows that her Beloved is pleased with her. She is living under His approving smile. She has hearkened to His invitation and left all to follow Him, and she knows that while she is faithful, He is her Lord and Lover. She has given and is giving daily the proofs of her love, and she receives daily the assurance of His. And what will not a woman do for

love! What an elevation is the humblest life where there is love! But what must be the exaltation when the love is divine, when the Beloved is the Son of God!

Within the convent, Jesus is the real Superior, Friend, Lover. For Jesus the Nuns work and pray. They see Jesus in the class-room, in the hospital, in the homes of the poor, and in one another. Under the eyes of Napoleon, his soldiers were glad and proud to charge the enemy and to suffer wounds or death. Under the eyes of Jesus Christ, the maidens of hallowed life are glad to give service and to offer the sacrifice of all that is dearest.

That is the life within the convent. It means living for Jesus and with Jesus. Can any career be imagined more attractive to a really spiritual nature? Is it to be wondered at that every year thousands and tens of thousands of our best young women leave the world to embrace the convent life? When we consider the good they do to mankind and the peace they enjoy in their lives, are they not fortunate even here before they enter into their reward? For there is a distinct joy for noble souls in knowing that they are

doing something to relieve the misery of the world.

And what body of women has such a record of service as they? We admire the Red Cross for its work among our soldiers, and rightly so, but the Sisterhood has been the Red Cross and the White Cross of Christianity for centuries. Not only in time of war, but at all times, they minister unto mankind in the way that does most good.

And all the while they are thus engaged, they are protected marvellously by their religious garb and rules, helped by the wise counsel of Superiors, aided by the pious practices of the Order, and thus they are led day by day through the journey of life to the certain possession of their heavenly home, and to the everlasting nuptials with their Spouse, Jesus Christ.

I give below some extracts taken from the book of directions of one of our Sisterhoods. It gives us a peep at the interior of a convent and speaks for itself.

"ON THE PERFECTION OF THE ORDINARY ACTIONS OF THE SISTERS, AND OF THE INTENTION THEY SHOULD HAVE IN PERFORMING THEM

1. The perfection of the Religious Soul depends not so much on doing extraordinary actions, as on doing *extraordinarily well* the ordinary actions and exercises of every day. In this particularly consists the difference between the perfect and imperfect in every religious community. Their daily duties and exercises are common, and the same for all—the manner of performing them distinguishes the one from the other.

2. The Sisters of this religious congregation shall therefore endeavor to acquit themselves of the ordinary duties and functions of their Institute with all possible care and attention, according to the advice of the Holy Ghost. "The good you ought to do, do it well;" viz., their daily prayers, their examen of conscience, their assisting at Mass, their office (certain prayers and psalms recited by all Sisters every day), spiritual lectures, school duties, meals, recreations, and their respective employments. By performing all and every

one of these duties *well*, they shall perfect themselves, and their day shall be full of merit and good works.

3. But in order to perform these ordinary exercises well, with a view to their perfection, they must, in doing them, have the purest intention of pleasing God, and God alone must be the principal motive of all their actions. It is this pure intention of pleasing God that characterizes the good work, and renders it valuable and meritorious. Without this, the most laborious functions of the Institute, the greatest austerities, the most heroic actions and sacrifices, are of little value, and are divested of that merit which flows from a pure and upright intention; while, on the contrary, when they are accompanied by it, actions which are most trivial and indifferent in themselves, become virtuous, valuable and meritorious of eternal life. Nothing is lost — every work and action fructifies — the religious soul enriches herself every moment, and lays up treasures of glory for an endless eternity.

4. The Sisters should consider this purity of intention in all their works, not merely as a simple practice of piety, but as an

essential duty of religion. They shall, therefore, most studiously watch over themselves, and guard against the insinuations of *subtle self-love*, lest they lose the merit of their labours and good works, by self-complacency or vain glory, or by having some other motive or end in view in their actions than to please the Almighty God. They are never to act from mere inclination, whim, or caprice, much less from passion; but their every action shall be performed with regularity and exactness in all its circumstances, and, with the utmost fervour, be referred by them solely to the Divine honour and glory, in union with the most holy actions and infinite merits of Jesus Christ. They shall, therefore, not only make a general offering, in the morning, to God of the works and actions of the day, but also, at the commencement of every action in particular, purify their motive by offering it up to God, having always in mind and engraved on their hearts this important advice of the Apostle, — Whether you eat, or whether you drink, or whatever else you do, do all for the glory of God, and in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

5. The means by which the Sisters may preserve this purity of intention, and perform well all their actions, both ordinary and extraordinary, are: — 1. To perform all their actions in the presence of God, considering that God sees them, and that on the manner in which they perform these works He will pronounce sentence on them. 2. To do every work in particular as if it were the only work they had to do. By this they will avoid all hurry and precipitation in their actions. 3. To do the duties and works of every day as if that day were to be the last of their mortal life, ever mindful of this advice of their Heavenly Spouse, Watch — be always prepared — you know not the day nor the hour in which you may be called upon.

ON UNION AND CHARITY

1. Love one another as I have loved you. — This was the special command of Jesus Christ to His Apostles; and, in the accomplishment of this divine precept of the love of God, consists, according to the Apostles, the plenitude of the law. This mutual love our Blessed Saviour desires

may be so perfect as to resemble, in some manner, the love and union which subsist between Himself and His Heavenly Father. This He inculcated, in the strongest terms, at the last conference of His mortal life with His beloved Disciples. This was His last dying injunction, which, as a most valuable legacy, He bequeathed to all His followers; and by this they were to prove themselves to be really His Disciples.

2. This mutual union and love should, therefore, eminently characterize religious souls. This should distinguish them above all others, as faithful spouses and servants of Jesus Christ. The Sisters of this pious Institute, founded and grounded on charity, should, therefore, make that favorite virtue of their Divine Master their own most favorite virtue. This they should study to maintain and cherish so perfectly among themselves as to live together as if they had but one heart and one soul in God. This love for one another should be such as to emulate the love and union of the blessed in heaven.

3. They shall, therefore, in conversation, manners and conduct most cautiously avoid whatever may in the least disturb

their union, or lessen in the smallest degree their mutual love and charity.

4. They shall be ready on all occasions to help and assist one another, bearing with patience and charity each other's defects, weaknesses and imperfections. They shall never enter into disputes or altercations; but, should they happen to differ in opinion on any subject, they shall propose their reasons with coolness, moderation and charity."

These are some of the directions which guide the Sisters within the convent. By them they become a holy family. A Sisterhood is truly another home of Nazareth, wherein, as formerly, Jesus, Mary and Joseph are ever present. With such companionship, do we wonder at the peace within the convent!

VII

THE VOWS

VII

THE VOWS

BUT WHY DO THOSE WHO WISH to show their love for Christ by service and sacrifice enter the convent to do it? Why may they not prove their love just as well outside?

They might, it is true, but in most cases they would not. The convent helps them to constancy, and supplies them with special aids to live up to their high purpose. We know the frailty of human nature. How often have we planned well and started well, only to end abruptly or to fail sadly of our purpose! Stability is necessary for successful achievement. The Religious Life gives stability to our fickle will, confirms it in its determination, and powerfully aids it in carrying out its design.

This it does mainly by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. If we reflect on life, we shall find that the three great sources of evil in the world are love of money, sexual love and love of one's

own way. Nearly every fall may be traced to one of these causes.

Love of money is not wrong in itself. Money is a good and necessary thing, but if it be loved to such an extent that to get it one will do wrong, then such a love is harmful and causes sin. And how many worship money as their God! It is the golden calf over again. Some will give their very souls for money. They stop at nothing to accumulate it. It is not only the vulgar thief that the love of money ruins, but also those who centre their lives and thoughts on money, and in doing so, neglect their duties to God and man.

By the vow of poverty in religion, that lure of money loses all power over the soul. For the vow of poverty forbids the use of possessions independently of the Superior's will. The Religious makes this renunciation in imitation and love of Jesus Christ who, being possessed of all things, stripped Himself, becoming poor for our sake. King of Heaven and Earth, Jesus was born in a stable and was buried in a tomb not His own.

The whole convent life is based on this idea of the imitation of Jesus Christ.

Poverty must be a blessed thing since Jesus chose it. Having riches and poverty set before Him, He chose to be poor. Hence the spouse of Christ desires to share His portion, and by her vow of poverty she binds herself to be poor with Christ poor. That vow cuts off all the disorders arising from love of money.

Sexual love is a good thing in itself. When, as God ordains, it is consecrated by marriage, it becomes His instrumentality for perpetuating the human race. But, like money, it may be abused, and most frequently is, to the sad detriment of the individual and society. The world is filled with disorders and crimes as a result of the wrong indulgence of sexual love.

By the vow of chastity, the Nun once for all renounces sex pleasures. In this also she is imitating her Model and Spouse, Christ, who was a virgin. Being His spiritual bride, she delights in having no lover but Him, and since He by His example put such a value on virginity, she embraces it for love of Him.

The vows of religion are not arbitrary restraints devised by human agencies, but the outcome of the example and teaching

of Jesus Christ. As during His days on earth there were those who served Him by keeping His commands, and others who served Him by sharing His ministry and keeping His counsels, so today. By the religious vows, the Nun unites herself to God in a most special way and dedicates herself to His service as did the apostles.

Obedience is the third and last vow taken by the Religious. How many people go wrong because they want to be a law to themselves! To do what they want, not what God wants! It was to counteract this tendency that our Lord taught us in the Our Father to say: "Thy will be done." The sinner says: "My will be done."

By the vow of obedience, the Religious renounces her own will in order to do the will of God, as declared to her by her Superior. In so doing, she removes from herself at a stroke the subtle temptations occasioned by self-love. In this vow also she has the sanction of God's example and counsel. Jesus became obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. Moreover, by calling the apostles to follow Him, He counselled obedience, since following Him meant obeying Him.

That this special following of Christ was something entirely different and distinct from the ordinary Christian life, our Lord shows by His reply to the rich young man in the Gospel. As this passage gives the principle and foundation of the Religious Life, I quote it entire:

"When Jesus was gone forth into the way, a certain man running up and kneeling before him, asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting? Jesus said, Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, bear not false witness, do no fraud, honour thy father and mother. But he answering, said to him: Master, all these things I have observed from my youth. And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him: One thing is wanting to thee, go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But he, being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions" (Mark 10: 17-22).

Why did Jesus love this young man? Because he was keeping the commandments. By their observance, he was doing what was necessary to attain life everlasting. But because he was good, Jesus counselled something yet better: go sell what thou hast, and come follow Me. Follow Me, be My disciple, do as the other apostles, and you shall have not only life everlasting, but treasure in heaven besides.

What that treasure is Christ did not specify, but it must be something special and wonderful, since it is God's reward for selling all and following Him. And to show that this invitation to follow Him was not addressed to this young man only, or to the apostles alone, He says: "Everyone that hath left house or brethren or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my name's sake shall receive a hundredfold and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. 19: 29).

That vows are acceptable to God, we know from Scripture. The Psalmist says: "Vow ye and pay to the Lord your God" (Ps. 75: 12); "Whatsoever is once consecrated shall be holy of holies to the Lord" (Lev. 27: 28); "I will pay my

vows in the sight of them that fear him" (Ps. 21: 26); "The vows of the just are acceptable to the Lord" (Ps. 15: 8); "When thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it: because the Lord thy God will require it" (Deut. 23: 21). In the Acts of the Apostles, it is stated that St. Paul had a vow. (Acts 18: 18).

Unless the vow had a special significance, it would be superfluous to make one. But what Scripture enjoins and what the apostles carried out was highly meritorious. The vow puts a lasting seal on the gift to God, removable not at our will, but only at His. It gives God something in perpetuity.

In a word, the Religious Life is a holocaust, a complete sacrifice of all one is or has, a renunciation as entire as that of the martyr. Hence it is called an unbloody martyrdom, and in God's sight it will merit the reward of a martyr. And perhaps more, for a martyr makes his great renunciation once for all, and the sacrifice is over. But a good Religious makes her sacrifice day after day, for years it may be.

And what is the attraction in that life

for so many of our best and most refined and most delicate young women? Oh, ask what is the attraction in anything sublime. What is the attraction in those heroic deeds which characterize the patriots of every nation? There is something in human nature besides profit and loss, there are higher things than comfort and money.

Look today at our young men who volunteer for the most dangerous posts of duty in the defense of country. Look at our young women who leave luxurious homes to go and serve the wounded and dying in the Red Cross service. It is the call of service and sacrifice to noble souls. The noble recognize it, and respond.

And should not Christ, the Son of God, make an appeal to those who seek distinction in His Kingdom? If He has gone before us and given the example of service and sacrifice, why should we be surprised if, at His call, thousands upon thousands leave all and follow Him? If country may call for the sacrifice of one's time, friends, career, limbs and very life, why may not God? He has. The martyrs gave their lives. The virgins and con-

fessors gave their possessions, their liberty and their labors. The religious soul of today gives herself and her service. And it is a glorious career.

On a monument in New York you will find these words, carved under the statue of a soldier: "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*," "It is a glorious thing to give your life for your country." If for country, why not for God, — and more so! And so the Religious understands it.

The girl who enters the convent is not looking for a good time, nor for promotion, nor for distinction, nor for recompense, but for service and sacrifice. But God is generous, more than we. We cannot outdo Him. Even in this life, the Nun receives a hundredfold. A peace fills her soul which the world cannot give nor take away. An exaltation of soul enthuses her as she reflects on the grandeur of the service she has entered. Moreover, she is surrounded by virtuous companions, who, like herself, have made the great renunciation. She is in the company of Jesus, as truly as were the holy women who, with His Blessed Mother, ministered unto Him during His mission on earth.

These are the things that count with noble souls. These are worth while.

And what a feeling of satisfaction comes into one's life when one realizes that one is engaged in something worth while! Often and often I have heard people say: "Oh, my life is such a waste; what am I doing anyway!" And they envy the Religious whose whole day and whole life is given to service that really serves mankind and, moreover, pleases God.

There are many young women who are not destined to be wives and mothers. For these, what a career of usefulness and piety the convent affords! A good wife and mother has a noble mission, one of the grandest on earth. The highest sanctity may be attained by the faithful wife and mother.

But many have no inclination for marriage. Many, if it were not for the convent, would merely drift in the journey of life. The convent for these, and also for those who willingly renounce the prospect of marriage, presents a career full of possibilities for the most aspiring natures.

It must not be supposed, because the Church of God encourages the convent

life, that she depreciates married life. Not at all. Indeed, the greatest advocate of marriage and the family is the Catholic Church. The greatest upholder of marriage is the Catholic Church. Among her saints are husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. Her grandest ritual is the Nuptial Mass.

No, indeed, it is not because she belittles marriage that she advocates the convent, but she realizes that there are many who would not marry under any consideration; she knows that there are many also who, to show their love for God, desire, if they receive the call, to renounce woman's most legitimate aspiration, that of wife and mother.

If they receive the call, — that is important. For a vocation to the Religious Life means a special call. That is the meaning of vocation. Christ distinctly tells us that those who are in His special service, who belong to His household, are chosen by Him. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain" (John 15: 16).

The convent life is not for everybody. It is a distinct calling, and those who are called know it. Marriage is a vocation for most people. It is God's ordination in the world for its perpetuation. But as in His days on earth He chose certain souls to stand apart and devote themselves to Him, so now.

The Psalmist proclaims the happiness of these chosen souls: "Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee: he shall dwell in thy courts" (Ps. 64:5). That is the best definition of the convent life, — Thy Courts. The convent is indeed the House of God, not only because Jesus dwells therein in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, but because Jesus through the Superior is the head of the Community. It is Jesus they serve, it is He whom they obey; He is their Master.

In the words of Holy Scripture: "Blessed are thy men and thy servants who stand before thee" (3 Kings 10:8); "Better is one day in thy courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners" (Ps. 83:11); "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,

O Lord: they shall praise thee for ever and ever" (Ps. 83: 5).

Yes, blessed, — blessed here by service and sacrifice for the noblest Master and in the noblest cause, blessed hereafter by companionship with the Lord forever in closest union and tenderest love!

I here subjoin the ceremony of the taking of the vows. It is most impressive. With slight variations it is the one in general use.

THE CEREMONY OF PROFESSION

On the day of Profession, all the Sisters offer their Communions for the Novice. She communicates at the Mass which is celebrated at the ceremony. The black veil and ring are left near the altar.

The Bishop blesses the veil at the Epistle side of the Altar.

V. Send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And Thou shalt renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray

O God, Who, by the light of the Holy Ghost, hast instructed the hearts of the

faithful, grant us, in the same spirit, a right understanding, and always to rejoice in His consolation, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.
R. Who made heaven and earth.
V. Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy.
R. And grant us Thy salvation.
V. O Lord, God of Hosts, convert us.
R. And show Thy face, and we shall be saved.
V. O Lord, hear my prayer.
R. And let my cry come unto Thee.
V. The Lord be with you.
R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray

We humbly beseech Thee, O Lord, that Thy bounteous blessing may descend on this garment, which is to be put on the head of Thy servant, and that this garment may be blessed, consecrated, unspotted and holy, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Let us pray

O God, head of all the faithful and Saviour of the whole body, sanctify with Thy right hand this covering of the veil, which for

Thy love and Thy most blessed mother's, Thy servant is about to put on her head, and may she, by Thy protection, always with equal purity of body and mind preserve what is mystically signified thereby, that when with the prudent virgins, she may come to the everlasting recompense of the saints, she also being prepared may be worthy to enter, conducted by Thee, to the nuptials of endless felicity, Who livest and reignest, one God, for ever and ever, Amen.

The Bishop then sprinkles the veil with holy water and incenses it.

The ring is then blessed at the Epistle side of the Altar.

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.
R. Who made heaven and earth.
V. The Lord be with you.
R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray

Creator and Preserver of mankind, giver of spiritual grace, author of eternal salvation, do Thou, O Lord, vouchsafe to send from heaven Thy Holy Spirit the Paraclete, and Thy holy benediction upon this ring, that it may be a powerful defence against

all the powers of the devil, and in Thy name I do bless and sanctify it, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

The Bishop sprinkles the ring with holy water, and having incensed it, reads the following Gospel:

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

V. The continuation of the holy Gospel according to St. Matthew (XVI, 24–28).

R. Glory be to thee, O Lord!

At that time, Jesus said to his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for my sake shall find it, for what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then will he render to every one according to his works.

Bishop. My child, what do you demand?

Novice. My Lord, I most humbly beg to be received to the Holy Profession.

Bishop. My child, do you consider yourself sufficiently instructed in what regards the vows of religion and the rules and constitutions of this Institute; and do you know the obligations you contract by the Holy Profession?

Novice. Yes, my Lord, with the grace of God.

Bishop. May God grant you perseverance in this your holy resolution, and may He deign, in His mercy, to consummate what He has begun. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

Then the solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost is said. The following prayers are offered for the Novice who is to be admitted to Profession.

Collect

Grant, O Lord! to this Thy servant, Whom Thou hast deigned to adorn with the honour of chastity, effectually to complete the work she hath undertaken, and that she may present to Thee its full perfection, may she deserve to bring what she hath

begun to a conclusion, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end, Amen.

Secret

Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord! in virtue of the sacrifice presented to Thee, that Thy servant here present may persevere in chastity to the end of her life, that the gates being open at the coming of the great King, she may be worthy to enter with joy into the heavenly kingdom, through Christ Our Lord, etc.

Post Communion

O God, Who hast established Thy habitation in a chaste heart, look down upon this Thy servant, and may she receive, by Thy consolation, whatsoever she requireth in her daily trials, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

The Mother Superior says aloud:

V. Offer to God the sacrifice of praise.

The Religious answers:

R. And pay Thy vows to the Most High.

The Novice rises and, advancing a step, says, in an audible voice:

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the sight of all His people, in the courts of the house of the Lord.

Act of Profession

In the name of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and under the protection of His Immaculate Mother Mary, ever Virgin, I, called in religion Sister (N), do vow and promise to God, Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and the service of the Poor, Sick and Ignorant, and to persevere until death in this Congregation, according to its approved rules and constitutions.

Then the Bishop says:

What God hath commenced in thee, may He Himself perfect; and may the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ preserve Thy soul unto everlasting life, Amen.

After which she receives Holy Communion. The Bishop then says the following:

Let us Pray

O God, to Whom every heart is open and every inclination manifest, and from Whom no secret is hidden! purify the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that we may deserve to

love Thee perfectly and praise Thee worthily, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end, Amen.

Let us pray

We beseech Thee, O Lord! that our actions may be protected by Thy inspirations, and carried on by Thy assistance, that every prayer and work of ours may always begin with Thee, and by Thee be happily ended, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

Let us pray

O Eternal God and Almighty Father! Who knowest the weakness of human frailty, look down, we beseech Thee, on this Thy servant, and vouchsafe to strengthen her infirmity with the overflowing abundance of Thy benediction, that, assisted by Thy grace, she may, by a holy, pious and religious life, be able vigilantly to keep the vows which she hath made by the influence of Thy inspiration, and, by keeping them,

merit eternal life, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Let us pray

May the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Mercies, Who willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he be converted and live, Who calleth all to repentance in His unspeakable mercy and wonted tenderness, inspire thee with true and constant contrition of heart and holy repentance, that thou mayest be able worthily to wear the habit of Religion and Holy Profession, and fulfil thy holy promises, and to persevere in His holy service, and happily arrive with His elect at everlasting joys. Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end, Amen.

The Sister says aloud:

Thou hast held me by my right hand; and by Thy will Thou hast conducted me; and with Thy glory Thou hast received me.

For what have I in heaven and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?

For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever.

For what have I in heaven and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?

The Bishop says:

Come, Spouse of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord hath prepared for thee forever.

The newly Professed says, in an audible voice:

Uphold me according to Thy word, and I shall live, and let me not be confounded in my expectation, Amen.

She then kneels down, and the Bishop says:

May the Lord be to thee a helper and protector, and pardon all thy sins, Amen.

The Bishop places the black veil on her head, saying:

Receive the holy veil, the emblem of chastity and modesty, which mayest thou carry before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life, and mayest live for ever and ever, Amen.

The Sister answers:

He has placed His seal on my forehead.

That I should admit no other lover but Him.

The Bishop takes the blessed ring in his right hand, the hand of the newly Professed

in his left, and putting the ring on the third finger of the left hand, says:

May Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, Who has now espoused thee, protect thee from all danger. Receive, then, the ring of faith, the seal of the Holy Ghost, that thou mayest be called the Spouse of Christ, and, if thou art faithful, be crowned with Him forever. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

The newly Professed rises and says, aloud:

I am espoused to Him Whom the angels serve, and at Whose beauty the sun and moon stand in wonder.

The Bishop blesses her, as follows:

May God the Father, Who, in the beginning created all things, bless thee.

R. Amen.

May God the Son, Who, as our Saviour, came down from heaven, and did not refuse to suffer the death of the cross, bless thee.

R. Amen.

May God the Holy Ghost, Who, in the River Jordan, rested on Christ in the likeness of a dove, bless thee.

R. Amen.

The newly Professed, standing, says in an audible voice:

The empire of the world and all the grandeur of this earth I have despised for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved, in Whom I have believed, and towards Whom my heart inclineth.

The newly Professed retires a few steps, and sings alernately with the choir:

My heart hath uttered a good word: I speak my works to the King.

Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved, in Whom I have believed, and towards Whom my heart inclineth.

I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my Lord, Jesus Christ.

Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved, in Whom I have believed, and towards Whom my heart inclineth.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

Whom I have seen, Whom I have loved, in Whom I have believed, and towards Whom my heart inclineth.

The Clergy and Religious stand, and the Te Deum is sung.

The Bishop then says:

Let us pray

O God, Who justifiest the wicked, and willest not the death of sinners, we humbly beseech Thee bountifully to protect with Thy heavenly assistance Thy servant, confiding in Thy mercy, and by Thy constant protection preserve her, that she may serve Thee continually, and not be separated from Thee by any temptation.

O merciful God! O God of clemency! to Whom all good things are pleasing, without Whom nothing good is begun, nothing good is accomplished, lend Thy compassionate ears to our most humble prayers, and defend this, Thy servant, on whom, in Thy holy name, we have put the veil, from every worldly vanity, secular impediment and carnal desire; and mercifully grant that she may be able to persevere devoutly in this holy purpose, and having received the forgiveness of her sins, be united with Thy elect, through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

The Bishop sprinkles the newly Professed with holy water, the Mother Assistant directs her to rise, makes, with her, a genuflection to the Holy Sacrament, and conducts her to

the Mother Superior, to whom she kneels; the Mother Superior raises and embraces her. She then proceeds to embrace the other Religious, bowing to each as she does so, and receives her candle from the Mother Assistant. During this time is sung:

(Psalm CXXXII)

Behold how good and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

As the dew of Hermon, which descendeth upon Mount Sion.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

For there the Lord hath commanded blessing and life for ever more.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

All retire, processionally, as they entered.

VIII

THE GATE OF HEAVEN

VIII

THE GATE OF HEAVEN

ON A CERTAIN OCCASION I WAS congratulating some novices in a Religious Community on their cheerfulness. One of them replied: "And why should we not be cheerful, for are we not at the gate of heaven?" The gate of heaven truly. By a single step, they have, as it were, accomplished life's journey and are at its terminal. True, they may have to wait for years for the gate to open, but they are securely over the dangerous road of life.

The convent is the haven of life's ocean. There the pious soul is sheltered from the storms that toss and destroy the vessels on the deep. That security for virtue, that help to piety, that wise guidance which the convent gives, is for certain souls a foretaste of heaven. It is that hundredfold promised by our Lord, and the prelude to the life everlasting which awaits them beyond the gates.

Contentment is the most valuable thing

in life. So precious is it that without it all things else count for nothing. And contentment is the portion of the bride of Christ. Not that she will not have her trials and struggles. They are part of her career of service and sacrifice. But they are so many roses of love which she delights to place on the altar of Jesus Christ.

We do not mind pain and privation if they produce something. A girl will deprive herself of pleasure and dress in order to help her brother get an education. The privation may cause suffering, but she considers it nothing, for she looks ahead to the day when her brother will be a lawyer, a physician or a priest. That prospect makes her very privation a pleasure.

So the saints have rejoiced in suffering and yearned for it. For it makes for them an exceeding weight of glory. They consider that Mary the Mother of Christ and all those who were dear to Him had their share of suffering. And as they want to be dear to Him, they welcome suffering in whatever way it comes. They do not expect to find in the convent an absence of the ills to which human nature is heir,

but they do expect to put them to good use.

And thus by the alchemy of God's love, they change the ordinary annoyances and suffering of life into pure gold for the Kingdom of Heaven. They look upon life as a preparation only for the real life beyond. They regard themselves as marble in the hands of the divine sculptor, who uses hammer and chisel to fashion them into heavenly forms. Blows we must receive in this life, willing or unwilling. The Nun accepts them willingly, knowing that in so doing she is helping her Maker in His work of perfecting her.

For God did not make us for a mere earthly career. If we look into things, we shall find that everything in the world is made for something higher and greater than itself. In the whole range of creation, you can think of nothing that was made for itself. Man himself makes nothing for its own sake, but for some ulterior purpose.

If you see a laborer in the street making mortar, it is not merely to make mortar that he does it. The mortar is not made for itself, but to hold together brick or

stone. The worker in a brick-yard does not make the brick for itself. It is formed in order to be a part of a wall or some such thing. And when the mason builds a wall, it is not for the wall's sake that he does so. His object in making the wall is to have it support a roof. When the carpenter lays the beams on the wall to make the roof, it is not for the roof's sake, but to complete a house. And the house, why is it made? Not surely for itself. No one ever builds a house to let it stand idle. He builds it for occupation; it is made as a dwelling for man.

And man himself, what is he made for? Not for himself, that is certain. God, in making him, had a purpose, just as a man has a purpose in making a house or a watch. And what is that purpose? On that question rests the whole philosophy of life.

It makes a great difference to us whether we are made for time or eternity. If we are made for this life, then we must seek our happiness, whatever it may be, here. If we are made for this world, only the things we can use and enjoy here have value.

But if we are made for eternity, if this

world is only the path to another and everlasting world, it puts a different aspect on things. Life assumes another form. It takes on a new purpose. For the end or purpose for which a thing is made has a bearing on everything connected with it.

Take the matter of dress, for instance. Suppose you are dressing for a wedding. With that end in view, you select certain clothes and arrange yourself differently from what you would if you were going to work. The end in view is a wedding suit, and that determines you in your entire dressing. But suppose you are dressing for a funeral? It is quite another matter. Wedding garments would be out of place. Light and cheerful colors would not harmonize with the occasion. So with the funeral in mind, you dress accordingly.

In philosophy there is a saying that the end is the last thing done, but the first thing thought of. The plan goes before the action. The plan directs all during the accomplishment and to the very end. As the end directs an artist in his work, so does man's last end direct him in his life. At least it should. If not, his career will be a failure.

Even with a definite end in view, how many fail to attain it. With no end in view, one gets nowhere, except by chance, a poor makeshift. So the end for which we are made is of prime importance to us during life. It gives a meaning and valuation to things which they would not have otherwise.

Matters which are difficult and disagreeable, if they help us on to reach the end we have in view, become desirable. If a man is digging for gold and it will belong to him, he does not mind the hardships of the trail, nor the fatigue of labor, nor the heat of the day, nor the routine of his work. It is the gold he sees that changes hardship into happiness. He looks beyond and beholds the comfort and enjoyment and influence which the gold will bring him. That enthuses him even in his fatigue. It sustains him in his weariness.

On the other hand, if a man is digging merely as a task, if there is no purpose or reward for his toil, if the gold is not to be his, if he is merely the servant of another, everything is hard and disagreeable, and finally unbearable.

Now, we are in this world for an end, for a purpose. If that end is life everlasting, if this life is but the way to our destination, our life assumes an altogether different phase from what it would if this life were the purpose and end of everything. Life has a new meaning when it is viewed in its relation to eternity. The most prosperous and fortunate life on earth becomes a failure if it fails to bring one to eternal life. On the other hand, the most miserable existence conceivable is a pronounced success if it ushers us in to everlasting happiness.

That the end of man is eternity, and not time, God Himself assures us. He tells us that this life is not all, that it is only the first stage of our career. But on this first part depends all the rest. Hence, if we know that our lives are conducting us securely and most advantageously to eternal life, we live cheerfully, spite of the difficulties, annoyances and sufferings of the journey.

A victorious army does not feel the fatigue of marching. It realizes that every step leads to triumph and honor. But a beaten army feels it is going nowhere, and

to nothing but new disaster and reproach. The march is painful, the steps are leaden.

Now the Religious feels the assurance of victory. The crown is certain. She is under the standard of Christ, who leads all His followers to triumph. No one who follows Him can lose. Either they must drop out of the ranks, or they will win. Defeat is impossible with Him.

That is true of all the followers of Christ, the great army of Christians, whose banner is the cross. But how much more true is it in regard to the Religious who form, as it were, the bodyguard of Christ. They are close at His side, as the apostles were in Galilee long ago. They carry out not only His commands, like the great army of the faithful, but also His slightest wishes. They are closely associated with Him in carrying on the mission which He inaugurated while He was on earth.

Christ the King, the great Captain, is fighting not for Himself, but for His followers. His nearest and dearest associates are those who are attached to Him by the vows of service and sacrifice. They may well feel assurance therefore. And with that assurance goes that cheerfulness, that

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calm, that peacefulness, which we observe in the convent life.

To those outside the faith, the life of a Nun is a mystery. Deprived of everything that others set value on, she is nevertheless more content than the richest among men. Oh, if they could only see what she sees, and hear what she hears! There would be no mystery about her life then.

And what is it she sees? She looks beyond the gates and beholds her true home, heaven. She sees there all that is worth living for. She realizes that no matter what the cost, it is as nothing in comparison with what it procures. For in that life beyond is the full enjoyment of intensest love, love so great that all earthly love is but a faint shadow in comparison. There all her love for father and mother and dear ones will be gratified a hundredfold.

But above all, the veil which now hides her Beloved will be removed, and she shall look upon Him face to face. Before His loveliness, all other beauty vanishes, all other love is absorbed. And while she looks on Him, entranced by His beauty and captivated by His love, she realizes

that, much as she loves Him, He loves her more. On earth she yielded to His pleading: "Child, give Me thy heart." In heaven, she shall hear His reply from His own lips: "Behold My heart which loves you with an infinite love."

That is heaven! For in God's love all bliss and all possessions and all love are transfused into one delirium of endless joy. In His love we love father and mother and all that the heart cleaves to on earth. In His love is the fulfilment of all our longings and aspirations. In His love we have everything, for by it we become sharers of the divinity.

That this firm assurance of the Nun rests on a solid basis and is not a mere fancy, we know from the best of all sources. It is not from a philosopher no matter how learned, nor from a scientist no matter how reliable, nor from any other human but fallible authority, that we know man's destiny, but from God Himself. It is He who tells us and from His very lips we learn what our destiny is.

No one knows what a thing is made for so well as the Maker. If you make something, you know just why you made it.

Others may conjecture what your purpose was, they may reason and draw conclusions, but you yourself know. An artist paints a picture. It may be to amuse himself, or to sell, or to give to a friend, or for any reason whatsoever. You may think he made it for this or that purpose, but if you wish to know for certain why he made it, no one can inform you so well as himself.

God is the Maker of man. He knows just why He made us. Let us go to Him, therefore, and find out why He made us and what our real destiny is, for He has declared it. In the first place, God tells us that we are not made for time, but eternity. "Man shall go into the home of eternity" (Eccl. 12:5). By God's own declaration, therefore, our home is not here, but hereafter.

Jesus Christ tells us that this home consists of everlasting life, and that we must obtain it by our own efforts as well as by His grace. "Labor for eternal life, which the Son of man will give" (John 6:27). We must labor for our home, even though it be God's gift. What this labor consists in Christ informs us when He says: "The

just shall go into life everlasting" (Matt. 25:46). Only those who are just, whose lives show regard for God's ordinances, shall enter that unending life beyond. It is not enough to live in order to reach Life, but we must live as God directs, we must be just in our dealings with God and man.

Furthermore, although God has created us for the noblest end conceivable, He tells us that there is such a thing as missing it. He does all in His power short of compulsion to have us reach our end, but He will not compel us, because He made us free. "Man being free to transgress shall receive an eternity of glory or an eternity of misery" (Eccl. 31:10). There are, therefore, two eternities, and it depends on each one of us which shall be ours; it is for us to choose.

Christ emphasizes the need of effort in attaining our end when He says: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:12). It is because of service faithfully performed that we are to reach our destination. That this service implies struggle and the triumph over our evil inclinations appears from these words of God: "To

him that shall overcome, I shall give to sit with me on my throne" (Apoc. 3: 21).

To reign with Christ, that is our destiny, if as good soldiers we overcome the enemy; both the enemy without and the enemy within. It is the cross here, but the crown hereafter. "You shall receive a never fading crown of glory" (1 Peter 5: 4).

But there is something more for us than glory and reward and life eternal, something so much more that, unless we had it direct from Christ Himself, we could not credit it. Our destiny is so grand that we should not dare hope for it of ourselves, so sublime that of ourselves we could never conceive of it. Not only does God declare to us that our destiny is eternal and our joy everlasting and our inheritance His kingdom, but He moreover solemnly proclaims that we are to be sharers of the divine nature and members of the family divine. "They who shall be accounted worthy to obtain life with me can die no more, for they are as angels, and are the children of God" (Luke 20: 35).

What a dignity is man's! What a destination for a creature of earth! What glory for us mortals!

These are the assurances which the Nun has as she faithfully lives the convent life. Is it any wonder that she is cheerful, even if at times she meets with ingratitude and suffers fatigue and experiences the many other trials which accompany a goodly life? Was it not necessary for Christ to suffer in order to enter into His glory, and does she expect better treatment than that of her Lord? Does not a spouse rejoice to share the lot of her beloved, and was not her Beloved afflicted in many ways?

Filled with the love of God, therefore, the good Nun lives on peacefully and contentedly, her gaze fixed on her home beyond and on her Beloved, realizing that when her warfare is over, she will be crowned the beloved child of God and the eternal spouse of Jesus Christ.

IX

A WORD TO THOSE WHO THINK OF ENTERING THE CONVENT

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CONVENT LIFE PRESENTS TO women the sublimest way of following Christ. Not that Christ may not be closely followed in every state and condition of life, but convent life, by its very nature, conduces to the closest companionship with Him. Extraordinary souls may rise to the greatest heights of sanctity in any career or state of life, but in the convent, even the ordinary soul is so helped by the vows, rules and good example, that piety becomes easy and sanctity is reached by many.

It is almost an assurance of eternal salvation to enter the convent. Living as the rules ordain gives virtually a guarantee of salvation. The facilities, therefore, for one's own everlasting welfare are very great. Unless one deliberately neglects the opportunities afforded by the life, salvation seems assured.

But perhaps not one in a thousand thinks of that on entering the convent. What is uppermost in the mind generally is an intense personal love of Jesus Christ and a desire to do what is pleasing to Him at any cost.

No one is obliged to enter the convent. God Himself does not oblige us to accept even His most urgent call. A vocation to the Religious Life is always an invitation. If thou wilt be perfect, etc. No matter how strong the vocation may be, it is always a voluntary matter which one may accept or decline. There is absolutely no compulsion in the matter from either God or man. A vocation in itself is not an obligation; its rejection is not a sin, but only an invitation declined.

Of course, in certain cases, a rejection of a vocation may lead to sinfulness, but not on account of the rejected vocation. A man in commercial life, by losing a good opportunity, may incur great damages, but the lost opportunity would not be the cause, but only the occasion of his losses. So a vocation that is rejected may be the occasion of one's meeting with spiritual detriment. But it is in itself no sin. For

a vocation is voluntary service. What is voluntary is not obligatory, and does not consequently oblige under pain of sin.

I think I may illustrate this by events in civic life, which not only show the voluntary character of a vocation, but also its very great merit and distinction.

At all times our government has the right to demand of its citizens the observance of the laws. In war times, the government may demand very great service. It may require men to give their lives, and women to sacrifice husband and son. And that by right. There is an obligation on the part of the people to obey their lawful rulers. The government absolutely obliges the people to service and sacrifice when there is need

During war, our men are at the front, risking their health, their limbs and their lives. Those at home are giving their time and their money to supply those who are fighting and dying. At home, people give up comforts and amusements and often necessities in order to comply with their government's orders. And this they are obliged to do under penalty of the severest punishments. And rightly so.

The government, therefore, obliges all the citizens to service and sacrifice in keeping the laws and enactments.

But there is another service which the government does not make obligatory. You can oblige a man to do certain things which call for ordinary virtue, but what is heroic you cannot command. That must come from the magnanimous heart. It is the outcome of generosity and the result of good will. Good will cannot be commanded, it must be solicited. Therefore, in our military service, in the departments which call for heroism, for magnanimity, for good will, the government does not force service, but asks for volunteers.

Take, for example, the aviation service. The government does not force men into that, but leaves it open to volunteers. It knows that the air service is not only very dangerous, but that it calls for initiative. Initiative never can be commanded. It must come from a devoted and willing heart.

So for the air service, our country appeals, but does not command. It tells the young man that the service is full of hardship and danger, that a great majority

of those who enter it meet with a tragic death. But it also points out the glory of it. It is essential to the army. Victory is impossible without it. Your country calls on you because she believes that you love her enough to make the supreme sacrifice for her. Will you enter?

And the generous young man, whose patriotism does not limit him to doing merely what he is obliged to, who seeks distinction in his country's cause, answers that he is willing and glad to enter. The man who thus replies has glory and his country's gratitude. But if he declines, he simply drops back into the great multitude who give obligatory service. And in the ordinary service, he may prove a hero. Also he may turn out a discredit. It depends on himself.

Now if our country may require service and sacrifice, God Almighty may do the same at least. And He does. By the commandments He obliges all men to serve Him. There is no choice where the commandments are concerned. It is a matter of obligation, under the severest penalties. "If thou wilt enter eternal life, keep my commandments." "This day I

have placed before thee life or death, eternal happiness or eternal misery: choose." For the great army of mortals, that is God's legislation.

But there is another service in His kingdom, a service that calls for heroism, a service full of sacrifice and hardship, a service that renounces the dearest pleasures of the heart, a martyrdom! To this service God does not oblige. He invites. He calls for volunteers. "If thou wilt be perfect, go sell all thou hast and come, follow me."

A vocation is an invitation from God Himself to aid Him in the continuation of the work He began on earth. It is a call, not only to His service in general, but to His particular service. All mankind is summoned to His general service, in observance of the commandments. Some are chosen from the immense army and called apart to labor at His side, with Him and for Him.

Of these, some by prayer and penance draw down the grace of God unto the souls of men. Others, by teaching, carry His message into the hearts of men, while others, by deeds of mercy, make Him

known and loved in the world of men. A sublime service! And a hard service! But a sweet service, actuated as it is by the personal love of Christ.

Are there not trials and disappointments? There are. They are in the aviation also, and men expect them. Are there dangers and fatigues and all kinds of privations and misunderstandings? There are. And in the aviation too. If men suffer and bleed for country, should they not take up the cross for Christ? And when He calls them to a service of distinction, should they not feel honored?

Oh, it costs! Yes. And so does everything that is worth anything. The distinguished men who are called by our Chief Executive to enter the nation's cabinet, does it not cost them much to leave their private interests and devote their time and energy to the government? But they feel honored in doing it because they are distinguished in the country's service. And to be distinguished in the service of Almighty God!

Our Lord tells us that he who leaves all and follows Him shall receive a hundredfold and life everlasting. That is the

religious vocation, the call of Christ to leave all and follow Him, in order to make salvation secure and to help in the salvation of others. What a glory to be associated with Jesus Christ in His mission!

And that is the career of the Nun. By prayer and penance and deeds of mercy, she is living in a measure the very life He lived among men. By good example, she presents to the world a powerful incentive to imitate Him who said: "Learn of me, who am meek and humble of heart." By teaching, she is bringing Him into the very lives of His little ones.

And thus she goes through life, living for a purpose. And what a high and noble purpose it is! It lifts the most simple life out of the ordinary, it gives a mission which any woman may feel proud of.

And going through life, fulfilling that mission, the Nun realizes she is on the way to a wonderful destination. At the journey's end she beholds with the eyes of faith her Lord awaiting her, awaiting her not only as her Lord, but as her Friend, yea, more, awaiting her as her Spouse. For it will be as loved and Beloved that they will meet.

With that end in view, the Nun does not mind the hardships and sacrifices on the way. Rather she expects and welcomes them. They are so many proofs she can offer to her Lord that she truly loves Him.

Recently I received the following letter from a young lady, who consulted me before she entered the convent. It was written after she was there seven years. I may add that in following out her purpose to become a Sister, she had to overcome very great opposition, not only from her family, but also from a gentleman who was devotedly attached to her and wished to marry her. She was of a wealthy and distinguished family, and joined one of the social service Sisterhoods.

Reverend and dear Father:

You will no doubt be surprised at my changed address. Sister A. and myself were sent here three months ago. At first I did not think I could break away from the Mother-house, where everything was so peaceful and devotional. But I find that the dear Lord is the same everywhere, and that when we are doing His work, the place

and conditions do not matter. This is a dreadful place, so much to be done, and such pitiable surroundings. But that is the comfort of it, that we can bring light into this dismal place and sunshine into the lives of these poor people.

And really, dear Father, our Lord never seemed so near as He does here. It seems that the more we sacrifice for His sake, the more He gives us of Himself. If anyone had told me some years ago that I should be away out here amidst so much poverty and unsightliness, I could not have believed it possible. But if I were free to do it all over again, I should gladly do so. I would not change my surroundings of squalor and misery for all the comforts of my own home, and you know what that was. For here I feel that I have a mission and an opportunity of doing something for our Lord in the persons of His poor brethren.

And, oh, they do need us so much! If you could only see how responsive they are to our efforts. Already we have transformed many homes and made them so inviting. Some of the men, who at first kept aloof from us, after they saw what we were doing for their children were ready to do anything for

us. In that way, we got many careless ones to practise their religion faithfully. Even in these short three months, I can see the wonderful efficacy of our Sisters' ministrations.

Do you, please, pray for us, dear Father, and for our work, that God may bless us and make us truly appreciate the favor He bestows on us in letting us have a part in His work for the welfare of souls. I thank God daily for my vocation, and I pray often for you who helped me attain it.

Your grateful child in Christ,

Sister ——

In conclusion, I wish to add a word of practical advice. One who is considering becoming a Nun should realize thoroughly that the life is a very hard one. She must know that the crown presupposes the cross, that victory means a battle. No matter how good and devoted the Sisters may be, they are all human, and wherever there is human nature there is misunderstanding, and with misunderstandings there goes a host of petty annoyances and hardships. If you expect to find your heaven here, even in a convent, you are mistaken. Heaven is at the end of the road, not on it.

If you do not feel that for the love of God, you can patiently bear with the defects of others and even with injustice, do not volunteer for His special service. Remain in the ranks, outside. Not that you will escape these difficulties outside, but you have not the greatness of soul required of one who is to follow close by the side of the Master.

Some women think that once they get inside a convent, it is goodbye to the shortcomings and troubles of life. To such, I say, keep out. Your life in a convent would be miserable. But if you go in expecting a hard way and a steep way and a narrow way, you may find that, after all, it is not so steep, nor hard, nor narrow. For with Christ at your side and holding your hand, what can be narrow or hard!

If, therefore, like the men in the air service, you want to do something out of the ordinary and feel that you can do it cheerfully, and if you recognize a strong call to the service, enlist. If you cannot do it cheerfully, drop it. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. If He is worth serving at all, He is worth serving cheerfully.

Serving cheerfully does not mean that

you must give nothing but agreeable service, but service of all kinds, as required. If you have that desire, and circumstances permit, you have the right spirit for a Nun's career.[1] And a Nun's career is Christ-like on earth, and makes one the Beloved of Christ for all eternity.

[1] All that has been said about vocations applies equally to the various brotherhoods, and to the Religious generally.

X

RED CROSS SISTERHOODS

X

RED CROSS SISTERHOODS

THE RED CROSS IS VERY PROMINENT nowadays. Thank God for that. For the Red Cross stands for service to the stricken. Many people think that the Red Cross is a late institution, that it is something discovered or developed in recent years. Some associate it with the modern trend of humanity-religion. They believe that it is a product of the nineteenth century culture; a culture due to breaking away from the old Church.

The Red Cross is distinctly a Catholic institution. The Red Cross is the outcome of Catholic belief and practice. The Order of the Red Cross was founded by a Catholic priest, blessed and confirmed by a pope, and did such wonderful work that centuries ago it was known and admired throughout Europe.

Such an impression did it make that when recent organizations of relief desired a symbol for their work, they took the

Red Cross, that Red Cross which Pope Sixtus V blessed on the habit of St. Camillus of Lellis when he confirmed his Order in the year 1586. A red cross on the breast and on the shoulder was the mark by which St. Camillus and his Order were distinguished. They took that symbol to show that they were ready to give their services to the sick and plague-stricken, even if it cost their lives.

But the first Red Cross was on Calvary, and it was made red by blood, the blood of the God-man. That was the beginning among mankind of that wonderful service of charity which characterizes Christianity. Before Christ, it was all for self. Woe to the conquered! was the moan of the defeated.

No prisoners of war were taken then, except as slaves. The defeated were slain, the wounded were left to die or were killed. Women and children also were slain, except the young and fair, who were reserved for a worse fate. But prisoners, as prisoners, were unknown. If taken alive, they were not held for exchange after hostilities were over, but were butchered or enslaved.

Do we think of that now? From cer-

tain quarters, you hear it said that Christianity has broken down. Do those who say so realize what a transformation has come over the world since? During the days of awful carnage, when nation was grappling with nation in bloody strife as never before, what a spectacle it was to see men glad to surrender to the enemy! And why? Because they knew that as prisoners they would be safe and cared for.

That is not the outcome of civilization. Greece and Rome had a civilization beyond ours, but they did not have that regard for their fellow man. They did not know what service to the stricken meant. The unfortunate, the poor, the diseased, the wounded, were as so many cattle. And what changed all that? What made a prisoner a brother? What made the plague-stricken a brother? What made the wounded a brother? The Red Cross, the Red Cross of Calvary.

We are so accustomed to the benefits of the Red Cross that we do not realize what the world would be today without it. The first women that ever served humanity on the battlefield were Sisters of Charity. In pagan tradition, there were

women on the field of battle, — amazons. Their purpose was to slay. The Sisters of Charity have for their mission to heal, to comfort, to save. Since their foundation, they have been on every battlefield of the world. Hence the name that history has given them, "Angels of the Battlefield."

The Sisters of Charity were the first in this noble work. They were not long the sole possessors of that honor. Today every Sisterhood in the Catholic Church is in the Red Cross service in the world war. Some are right on the battlefield, some in base hospitals, some in prison camps, some near the trenches and some in the homes of wounded soldiers. Even the cloistered Nuns are in the service. They have opened their doors to the sick and wounded soldiers, and have served them with a kindness and carefulness which none but their own mothers could bestow on them.

The governments of Europe recognize the splendid and heroic service of the Nuns. Many indeed have been decorated for bravery in the discharge of duty. In official communications, the commanding officers have frequently extolled the service

of the Sisters. The unofficial commendation they receive is known only to God Himself. Hardly a wounded soldier in any of the armies but has words of praise and gratitude for these angels of mercy.

That is going on today. It is an indication of what has been going on always in the Catholic Church. Whether it were Sisters or Monks, or Knights Hospitalers or Knights of the Cross, the same story is writ'en in the annals of every century. Service to the stricken! That is the note that rings out in the Church's symphony of Charity throughout the ages.

But the Red Cross is not only for the battlefield. It is for every form of human misery. Wherever there is helplessness, there you will find the Red Cross Sisters. As I am writing these lines, the Spanish Influenza is raging here in Boston. It is a veritable plague. The hospitals are filled to capacity with victims. The nurses have broken down under the strain. In the City Hospital there are, as I write, forty nurses down with the contagion. Some are dying.

I was called out to a case last night at midnight. When I got to the house, the

woman at the door informed me that there were two cases on the top floor. Then she gave me the further information that there was a third victim who had been taken to the hospital, and that they could not take the others because there was no room. Afterwards she added apologetically: "Father, I am ashamed to tell you that nobody has been near the sick people upstairs all day. I am the mother of four children, and if anything happened to me, what would become of them? So I was afraid to go up, and there was no one else to do so."

I hurried upstairs. Both the persons were in a dying condition. I administered the last rites and rendered what little service I could. Immediately I phoned to headquarters for a nurse. None was to be had. I phoned to all the hospitals. All were filled. Hastily making some temporary arrangements for the poor, neglected victims, I reported the case to the officials. They were helpless.

Next day, a call was issued by the authorities for women to volunteer as nurses. At the very first call, one hundred and twelve Sisters volunteered. In one con-

vent of the Sisters of St. Joseph, there were sixty Sisters all told. Sixty volunteered! War, plague, calamity, disaster, all forms of human distress, summon the Red Cross Sisterhoods, and they never fail to respond.

The American Red Cross and the British Red Cross and the other Red Cross Societies are doing wonderful deeds of helpfulness in the world today. God bless them for it! But what they are doing occasionally, the Red Cross Sisterhoods are doing always. What the Red Cross Societies take up for a few months, or years, the Sisterhoods take up for their entire lives. What the Red Cross Societies do under the glamour of publicity and often for remuneration, the Sisterhoods do quietly, unnoticed, and absolutely gratis. What is for the Red Cross Societies a passing service is for the Sisterhoods their life's work.

And this life's vocation means a great deal in the character of the service rendered. The Sisterhoods are absolutely devoted to their charge. They never think of themselves or the future. They look for no appreciation. One thing only is before them, human misery which they can re-

lieve. And they relieve it as they would if Christ were there in person. It is for love of Him they do it. It is as if done unto Him.

And that makes the difference, that gives them the indescribable charm and efficiency which is such a mystery to those not of our faith. Non-Catholics marvel at the devotion and self-sacrifice of the Sisters. But if they saw the Sisters in daily meditation at the foot of the Cross, they would understand whence comes their inspiration and their strength. It is from the first Red Cross that they have learned the lesson of service and sacrifice.

In order to confirm the statements made in regard to the devotion and efficiency of the Red Cross Sisterhoods, I subjoin the following:

"Many books have been written on the work of women in this war (Civil War, 1865), but little has ever been published concerning the self-sacrificing labors of the Sisterhoods. The soldiers of the North and the South have on many occasions given expression to the esteem and affection in which they hold the Sisters who

devoted their lives to the care of the sick and and wounded. The story of their patriotic and humane work will live as long as love for loyalty, regard for duty and admiration for self-sacrifice exist in the hearts of the American people."[1]

The Sisterhoods that participated in Red Cross work in the Civil War were principally the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of the Holy Cross. As an indication of the esteem in which the Sisters were held by the government, the following incident will show.

In July, 1862, an order came from Washington that no women nurses were to remain at Point Lookout. The Sisters made preparations to leave, but the chief physician said to them: "Remain here, Sisters, until I hear from Washington, for we cannot dispense with your services." The physician telegraphed to Washington, and received this reply: "The Sisters of Charity are not included in our orders, but all other women are to leave the place!"[2]

[1] "Angels of the Battlefield," p. 3.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 66.

A still higher tribute came from the President himself. At one period of the war, there was difficulty and misunderstanding about supplies. Mr. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, refused to supply more rations for the current month. The President was appealed to. He sent the following reply:

"*To all whom it may concern:* —
On application of the Sisters of Mercy in Chicago, and the Military Hospital in Washington, furnish such provisions as they desire to purchase and charge the same to the War Department.

(*Signed*) ABRAHAM LINCOLN" [1]

As regards their efficiency, it would be hard to find greater praise than that given by the following tribute:

"There was the Mound City Hospital, which was considered the best military hospital in the United States. Here the Sisters of the Holy Cross were employed as nurses, one or more to each ward. Mother Angela was the Superior, a gifted

[1] "Annals of the Sisters of Mercy."

lady of rare cultivation and executive ability, with winning sweetness of manner. She was a member of the Ewing family and a cousin of General and Mrs. Sherman. The Sisters had nearly broken up their famous schools at South Bend to answer the demand for nurses. The world has known no nobler and heroic women than those found in the ranks of the Catholic Sisterhoods." (Mary A. Livermore, non-Catholic.) [1]

The Sisters did not confine their services to the hospitals, however well they performed them, but went right out onto the field of battle, as appears from this testimony of Captain Crawford:

"On all God's earth, there are no nobler women than those who wear the garb of Catholic Sisters. I had opportunities of observing their work, not only in the camp and hospital but on the death-swept field of battle. Where bullets hissed, I have seen the Sisters moving over the field, administering to the wants of the wounded. I am not a Catholic, but I stand ready at

[1] "A Woman's Story of the War."

any time to defend these noble women even with my life, for I owe that life to them.

(*Signed*) JOHN CRAWFORD" [1]

All these testimonies refer to our own Civil War. What the Sisters did in that disastrous conflict they have done on every field of Europe where armies have contended.

The citation which I now give is an official communication from Queen Victoria to Sister Mary Aloysius:

"*Pall Mall, London, S. W.*
Feb. 15, 1897

MADAM: —

The Queen having been pleased to bestow upon you the decoration of the Royal Red Cross, I have to inform you that, in the case of such honours as this, it is the custom of Her Majesty to personally bestow the decoration upon the recipient, and I have therefore to request that you will be so good as to inform me whether it would be convenient to you to attend

[1] "Angels of the Battlefield," p. 225.

at Windsor some time within the next few weeks.

I am, Madam,

Your obedient servant,

(*Signed*) GEORGE M. FARQUHARSON

To *Sister Mary Aloysius.*

A few months later, in August, 1897, on the occasion of her Diamond Jubilee, the Queen of Great Britain conferred the decoration of the Royal Red Cross upon Army Nursing Sisters Mary Helen, Mary Stanislaus, Mary Anastasius and Mary de Chantal, in recognition of their services in tending the sick and wounded at the seat of war during the Crimean campaign of 1854–56. Miss Nightingale wrote to the government a very laudatory letter on the services rendered by the Sisters during that campaign.

It was the realization of what the Sisterhoods were doing in hospitals and on battlefields that inspired the poet to pen these lines:

Unshrinking where pestilence scatters his breath,
Like an angel she moves 'mid the vapor of death.

Where rings the loud musket and flashes the sword,
Unfearing she walks, for she follows the Lord.
How sweetly she bends o'er each plague-tainted face,
With looks that are lighted with holiest grace;
How kindly she dresses each suffering limb,
For she sees in the wounded the image of Him.

GERALD GRIFFIN

I shall conclude this matter with a quotation from the National Catholic Weekly, *America*. The author is Barbara de Courson, who is especially qualified to speak on the subject.

"Many articles, even books, have been written, since the War (1914), to celebrate the courage and self-sacrifice of the Red Cross Associations, whose members have devoted their lives to the assistance of our stricken soldiers. Among these brave women, Nuns, belonging to different Religious Orders, have a place of honor, but in general their work in this respect is less widely known than that of women of the world, who left their homes to take up the life of hospital nurses. This comes from no de-

sire to minimize or ignore the work of the Religious, but, as our readers know, they shun, rather than court, attention, and have a marked aversion to self-advertising.

"Nevertheless, it is only just that the work of the French Nuns since the war began should be made known, however briefly, to American readers. The same readers have not forgotten that, some years before the war, the anti-clerical French government drove the nursing Sisters from the public hospitals, and, on this occasion, the medical men, who might perhaps have interfered successfully in their favor, failed to do so. Now, these same surgeons and doctors are eager to secure the Nuns' services and openly recognize their value as sick nurses in times of danger and overwork.

"At the outset of the war, certain Religous women, who nursed the wounded soldiers near the eastern frontier, were through circumstances forced into positions of unexpected responsibility. Early in September, a little town was taken by the French, and, at a moment of intense stress and confusion, Sister Julie was, to all intents and purposes, the 'Mayoress'

of Gerbéviller. She provided food for the troops and remedies for the wounded, while at the same time she encouraged the civilians who came in contact with her invigorating personality. For her services Sister Julie was given the medal of the Legion of Honor by the President of the Republic, a mark of consideration that she neither expected nor desired.

"At another little town, Clermont en Argonne, a Sister of Charity, Sister Gabrielle, was at the head of the local hospital, when news of the soldiers' approach spread like wildfire through the country. The civil authorities fled, and the military authorities, who were ordered to leave, offered to take away the Sisters. 'Can you also remove the old people whose home is at the hospital?' asked Sister Gabrielle. This was impossible, for motor cars were not in sufficient numbers. 'Then I remain,' she said, and alone in the deserted town she waited. Part of the town perished, but the hospital was saved through the presence of mind of this brave daughter of St. Vincent. Like Sister Julie, Sister Gabrielle was mentioned in dispatches and decorated by the French government.

"The Sisters of the hospitals of Arras remained at their post in the bombarded city when the inhabitants fled, and their attitude was praised by their Bishop, the late Mgr. Lobbedey. A young Augustinian Nun was killed in the wards; as she fell, she was heard to say: 'I offer my life for France.' The diary of a Sister of Charity of Arras is instructive; it is very simple reading. The writer tells of the havoc wrought in the doomed city during the month of October, 1914; how the Sisters led their daily life, catered for provisions, provided for their orphans, their sick and their poor, and between whiles said the rosary with a perfect faith in God's protection.

"Since 1914, similar scenes have taken place at Rheims, the martyred city, that has only lately been evacuated by its Archbishop, Cardinal Luçon. The members of several communities were, at their urgent request, allowed to remain after the greater part of the inhabitants had been removed by the military authorities; among these Nuns the last to leave Rheims were the Sisters of Charity and the Little Sisters of the Assumption, the nurses and serv-

ants of the poor. As long as any poor and sick remained in the cellars, where the people dwelt night and day, the Sisters had work to do, and they did it with a cheerfulness that is a charming form of heroism.

All the French Nuns have not experienced the tragic adventures that made Sister Julie and Sister Gabrielle famous, but throughout the length and breadth of France, they have worked unceasingly on behalf of our wounded soldiers. The Nuns of Soissons, of Senlis, of Compiegne, of Bethune and Bapaume, have been mentioned in dispatches and given the Croix de Guerre. The French Nuns of Bagdad were decorated by Sir Stanley Maude a week before his death, in recognition of their devotedness to the wounded British soldiers. Others, whose work lay outside the army zone, have expended the same devotion on our soldiers, but the happy results of their influence will only be revealed hereafter; till then they are content to work day after day, quietly, humbly, silently, shunning rather than courting attention, their eyes and hearts fixed on the Master to whom their lives are consecrated.

"It has been my privilege since the war began to be in constant touch with the Nuns who direct a hospital for wounded soldiers. A few ladies are allowed to help the Sisters in their work, but it is the Nuns who direct and govern, who dress the wounds and exercise a strong and softening influence over their guests. I have noticed, during nearly four years, that in general, whether he is religious or the reverse, the French soldier prefers to be nursed by Nuns; he has a curious sense of possession where the Sisters are concerned. It is awkwardly expressed, but one gathers the meaning that underlies the words: 'The Nuns think only of us,' said one man; and another: 'The Red Cross Ladies are very kind, but the Sisters belong to us.'

"Another observation that results from my close contact with the French Nuns of 1918 is the utter futility of the accusations brought against the nursing Sisters, when, some years ago, the government drove them from the hospitals. They were said to be old-fashioned in their methods, averse to science, careless in their ways, etc. Whether or not these charges were

well founded THEN, they cannot be made Now. The nursing Sisters are certificated Red Cross nurses, with the proper training, and they have passed the regular examinations, without which they cannot deal with serious cases, and they are fully competent.

"It is not only in the hospitals that the Nuns of France serve their country at a moment when its energies are taxed to the utmost. They are the good angels of the refugees, whom the recent advance has driven from their homes. The other day, at the Paris Gare du Nord, arrived 150 little waifs, boys and girls, who came straight from St. Omer, then furiously shelled by the enemy's airships. They were under the care of four sweet-faced Sisters of Charity, around whom they gathered when the train stopped. At the request of the director of the canteen, the children were marshalled into a big room and fed with bread and milk. It was good to see their reliance on the Sisters and the latter's gentle authority over their little flock; evidently under the shadow of the white cornette the children felt safe. This reliance also exists among the soldiers.

"In September, 1914, the hospital of

Senlis, crowded with wounded French, was shelled by the enemy. The Nuns walked up and down the wards saying their rosary. 'Do not leave us, Sisters,' cried the helpless soldiers, 'if you are with us, we feel safe.' Their confidence was rewarded. The hospital walls were partly destroyed and the furniture shattered, but no soldier was killed. This feeling of reliance is made up of respect and affection. It speaks volumes for the attitude of the Religious women, who, for the last four years, have been the good angels of thousands of stricken fighting men.

"When the war is over, we shall probably hear that the Nuns who remained in the provinces now held by the enemy, did the same, and we imagine that in many places the much-tried people rallied round a white cornette or a black veil with the instinct of frightened children clinging to a mother's hand. There is an element of motherhood about every Nun that makes her the French soldier's confidant and friend, when, maimed and helpless, he lies on a hospital bed. Quite naturally, and often without any religious motive, he prefers Nuns to 'dames.' Their impersonal attitude gives

him a feeling that the Nun is there only for him, that nothing matters to her but his condition, that she is not distracted by the thought of husband and children from her daily task. To this somewhat selfish feeling, is added an hereditary respect for Les Bonnes Sœurs, noticeable among peasant soldiers especially. Then it sometimes happens that our men have been nursed in hospitals where the secular nurses were lacking in proper reserve and dignity, where they were giddy and frivolous, and, said one soldier, 'looking as if they had dressed up and played at being nurses.' Being generally men of the people, they do not always discriminate between lay women whose devotion to the maimed soldiers is simply heroic, and other women wearing the uniform but lacking the true spirit of the genuine nurse.

"The Nun's habit and training inspire the wounded men with confidence, and, together with their motherliness, there is about Nuns in general an element of youthfulness surviving middle age, combined with much practical experience in dealing with the working classes. In the hospital that I know best, this is very remarkable.

"This hospital has been more or less filled with wounded soldiers since October 1914. It stands in a Paris suburb and was, before the war, the novitiate of a Congregation whose members are, in a literal sense, the servants of the poor. The Little Sisters of the Assumption were founded, some fifty years ago, for this object. Where the mother of a family is laid up, it is they who, after nursing the sick woman, wash and dress the children, sweep the room and cook the dinner.

"The Congregation spread rapidly, for it filled up a social want and seemed, in some measure, to solve the much talked of social question. By bringing order, comfort and sometimes religion into the poor homes, the Sisters drive away the bitterness that breeds hatred and jealousy of those whom fortune has favored. They know their clients thoroughly, and are better informed of their rights and wrongs than many theorists who have studied the subject from books only.

"The atmosphere of a hospital directed by Nuns is singularly peaceful; in this particular one, the Sisters are the directing spirits and, being certificated sick nurses,

it is they who deal with the grave cases. The Red Cross ladies who work with them are their friends and helpers, but the responsibility, fatigue and heavy work rest on the Nuns. It is curious to notice how the roughest soldiers soon become gentle and docile under their rule, or rather, how they fall in naturally with the spirit of the place. In a hospital where religious women form the majority of the nurses, there is a groundwork of disciplined habits that it is difficult to find elsewhere, and this in itself entails peace and order. Then, the Nuns' experience in dealing with their clients in the crowded suburb has taught them to avoid undue pressure and indiscreet zeal in religious matters.

My personal knowledge, acquired during four years, enables me to speak highly of the Sisters' tact in this respect, and the remark applies to Nuns in general. They know more than we do of the evil influences that have been at work for more than a quarter of a century among the French working people; how the godless schools, the law in favor of divorce, the evil pamphlets and papers, added to the pressure exercised by a government under the control

of French Freemasonry, have contributed, slowly but surely, to destroy religious convictions and habits. Hence their prudence and pity, their wise, careful avoidance of anything resembling pressure, their feeling that every conversion should be the result of enlightened convictions, not of mere sentiment.

"Volumes might be written on the manner in which the Nuns of France have tended our fighting men for the last four years. Some have done so under fire, but if the part played by Sister Julie at Gerbéviller and by the Sisters of Arras, Bethune, Rheims, Amiens, and of many martyred towns, is more brilliant, because more dangerous, the obscure work done by thousands of others is none the less worthy of praise. Their skill in nursing these terribly wounded men has done away with the prejudice that, because they were Nuns, they were old-fashioned in their methods and opposed to the progress of modern science, and besides caring for the soldiers' bodies, they have in other ways helped to build up a new France.

"The hospital to which I refer has wit-

nessed many wonderful cures that the surgeons and doctors attribute to the patience, skill and careful nursing of the Sisters, but it has also been the scene of illuminating conversions, brought about by their silent influence. The little chapel framed in trees where, on certain days, when the fate of France seemed trembling in the balance, prayers and cantiques rose like a strong cry to heaven, has been the scene of innumerable baptisms, marriages and confirmations; the officiating priest being a wounded soldier-priest or a militarized bishop, and the happy neophyte a blue soldier, who from negligence rather than prejudice lived outside the Church. It is thus that the nursing Sisters of France are serving their country; they are building up the France of tomorrow by healing our soldiers' bodies and often their souls. No statistics can be drawn up of their services, and only those who witness, day after day, their quiet self-devotion, realize what it implies and the far-reaching results that it has brought about among men to whom the war, in spite of its terrible suffering, will have been a blessing in disguise."

XI

SOCIAL SERVICE SISTERHOODS

XI

SOCIAL SERVICE SISTERHOODS

THERE ARE SOME GOOD PEOPLE who believe that the uplift and betterment of the lower classes is a modern virtue. They fancy that it is the outcome of a broader Christianity. The brotherhood of man is, in their eyes, a discovery of recent times. Of course, these people will be surprised to learn that the brotherhood of man began with Jesus Christ.

Another shock to them will be to learn that social service began with the apostles, in consequence of the lessons they learned from the Master. Hardly had the Church of Christ begun its mission when a social service Order was established. The apostles, seeing the need of the poorer brethren, appointed certain devout women to minister unto them. These were called deaconesses. They were the first body of women in the history of the world who engaged in what we call slum work.

There are many persons who think that

slumming is a very modern invention, the result of our improved humanity. They point to slum-workers as an argument for the superiority of the recent religion of humanity over that of the old Church. Well, when the Church was let alone, there were no slums. The monks looked to that. But in the beginning, before the old Church got fairly started, there were slums, and also slum-workers. The deaconnesses mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles were the first to take up work in the slums.

I said when the old Church was let alone there were no slums. This is not a treatise on that matter, so I shall not go into details. I merely mention one fact: before the Reformation there were no poorhouses. Was there no poverty? Oh, yes. "The poor you shall have always with you," said our Lord.

But the Church regarded the poor as her very own. She relieved them without packing them into poorhouses. She established Orders of men and women whose sole object was to care for the needy and the unfortunate. She had in mind that other saying of our Lord: "What you do to the

least of my brethren, that you do unto me." You see He calls the poor His brethren.

That is the way the Church has always considered them; not as outcasts, not as a sore of the civic body, but as helpless and injured members; not as a lower caste, but as of the same family, with God as the common Father. And so the Church devoted her attention to them as you would to a member of your family who was in need. Every monastery and church and convent was a relief station.

I could substantiate this by documentary evidence from non-Catholic sources, but I must hasten on to the matter in hand, — the Social Service Sisterhoods.

I pass over the early and middle ages and even modern times, except the later period, and take up what we have evidence of today. What do we mean nowadays by social service? The name is new, the idea is as old as the Church. It means voluntary work among the poor, the ignorant, the sick, the helpless, the wayward and the criminal. Its purpose is to appeal to the souls of men by relieving their bodily ills.

Mere bodily betterment is a good thing, but that is only a part. The main thing about a man is his spirit. If that is right, the man will be right. He will know how to care for himself. And if illness or injury or misfortune pursue him, he will know how to bear it.

And the way to make a man's soul right is Christ's way. "I am the Way; I am the Light of the world, he that followeth after me walketh not in darkness," saith the Lord. The object of true social service is to bring the light of Christ into the souls of men. Under that light, misery disappears. Under that light, caste disappears. Under that light, the meanest beggar realizes he is a child of God. Knowing that he is heir to the Kingdom of God, his privations are not misery, his lowliness is not inferiority. He is brother to the loftiest of earth.

For a time, it is true, there is a difference in outward conditions, but the grave levels all that. And the grave also solves everything, for it is the gate to the Kingdom. That gate opens to the man who lives right. To the man who follows Christ, it is the door to his Father's home. It is

shut to the man who lives wrong, were he king, millionaire or philosopher. That is the light of Christ, which, if it enter the soul of man, ennobles the meanest, uplifts him, transforms him and makes him truly a man.

The Social Service Sisterhoods aim at that. While ministering unto the needs of the body, gently and helpfully, they make these ministrations serve the higher good of enlightening the mind and healing the soul. And this they do, not by cheap phrases and cant expressions, but by a life of sacrifice, which speaks better than the language of the lips.

With the tenderness of a mother, they care for orphan children. There was no such thing as an orphanage in the world until the Church established this great charity. Before the modern orphanages were founded, it was the parish church or the monastery or the convent that cared for the fatherless. That was when all Europe was Catholic. After the Reformation, when churches were despoiled and monasteries and convents were robbed or abolished, the poor began to multiply, and with the poor the orphans.

You know the conditions of big cities in consequence of irreligion. Infants are abandoned, children neglected or discarded. The Church did not stop to ask what caused it or whose fault it was. Like the Good Samaritan, she set out to relieve it.

What a beautiful picture that is of St. Vincent de Paul picking up abandoned children in the slums of Paris, and carrying them in his arms to some Catholic lady's house! Day after day he went his rounds, and day after day he found good homes for these little lost ones. He interested Catholic women in this and other works of mercy. They gave of their time and money to this wonderful charity.

Finally, he established the Sisters of Charity, that angelic corps of women, whose services to mankind ever since have evoked the gratitude of millions and the praise of mankind. And now all over the world you will find foundling asylums for the care of abandoned infants, and orphanages for the fatherless, under the motherly care and supervision of the Sisters of Charity, God bless them! That was the foundation of the world-wide Order of the Sisters of Charity.

Another Sisterhood in these later days, which has endeared itself to mankind, is the Order of Mercy. Its foundation reads like a romance.

Catherine McAuley was a young Irish lady whose parents died when she was a child. She was adopted by wealthy Protestant relatives. Spite of every inducement, she remained true to her faith. One day when she was out visiting, she heard of an attractive but poor working girl whose virtue was in great danger on account of her surroundings. The girl was not fallen, but slipping. Catherine got interested in her, and tried to find a good lodging place for her, where she would be out of danger after her day's work. But nobody wanted that kind of girl around. The result was that eventually the girl's beauty was her downfall.

This event made a great impression on Catherine. A few years later her guardians died, leaving to her their immense fortune, — the equivalent of half a million dollars nowadays. Her mind at once reverted to the unfortunate girl. She made up her mind to do something for girls similarly situated.

She proceeded straightway to interest a few ladies in her project. Using her money generously, she fitted up an attractive home in the Metropolis. Here she welcomed working girls who had no homes of their own. Realizing that these girls came home fatigued, and that they needed not only rest but recreation, she did all in her power to make the establishment a home-like place.

"*Religion does not censure or exclude*
Unnumbered pleasures harmlessly pursued."

Volunteers for this good work presented themselves, and soon it was in a flourishing condition.

Catherine realized that if the good was to continue on, it must not be left to individual effort. Many people get interested in a thing for a time, and then drop it. Miss McAuley noticed that after a time the real work was done by a few devoted souls, as is usually the case.

Gradually it dawned on her to stabilize the work by forming an association of women who would devote their lives exclusively to this and other works of mercy. She gave to the project not only her for-

tune, but herself. By degrees the results of her efforts were so gratifying that she was advised to seek the approbation of the Church on her mission.

Holy Mother Church, good mother that she is, always encourages true charity. On the 24th of September, 1827, the feast of Our Blessed Lady of Mercy, the devoted band of women was formed into a Religious Community, with Mother Catherine as the Superior, and the world was enriched by a new foundation, the Order of Mercy.

Here is the vow they take, in addition to the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience:

"*I do vow and promise to God the service of the Poor, Sick and Ignorant, and to persevere until death in this Institute of Our Lady of Mercy.*"

For although Mother McAuley began her mission to endangered working girls, she did not let it rest there. Like the Sisters of Charity, their mission is to relieve misery wherever found.

These two Orders of social service are now established the world over. Sisters of Charity and Sisters of Mercy are house-

hold words wherever social service is known. These consecrated virgins visit the homes of the poor, the haunts of vice, hospitals, prisons and plague spots. There is no need of society which they do not fill. Colleges, academies, orphanages, hospitals, visitation of the afflicted and unfortunate, are some of the social service activities they maintain.

These are only two Orders. What they are doing, a hundred other Sisterhoods are engaged in. I made special mention of the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Mercy because they are synonymous with social service. But the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Benedictines, the Augustinians, and other Sisterhoods are devoting their lives to social service as earnestly and efficiently as the Sisters of Charity or the Sisters of Mercy.

A perusal of the rules of one of these Social Service Orders will enable us to see the motive that inspires them and the grandeur of their vocation:

"Our purpose is to honour our Lord Jesus Christ, as the source and model of all

charity, serving Him corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor, whether the sick, or children, or prisoners, or others who, through shame, are deterred from making known their necessities. To correspond worthily to so holy a vocation and to imitate an exemplar so perfect, we ought to endeavor to live holily and to labor assiduously for our own perfection, joining the interior exercises of the spiritual life to the exterior employments of Christian charity.

"We are much more exposed exteriorly than enclosed Religious, having ordinarily for a convent but the houses of the sick, for a cell but a hired room, for a chapel but the parish church, for a cloister but the streets of the city and the wards of hospitals, for enclosure but obedience, for a grate but the fear of God, and for a veil but holy modesty. We are obliged by this consideration to lead, exteriorly and interiorly, a life as virtuous, as pure, as edifying, as Nuns in the convent.

"Above all, we shall value the salvation of our souls more than all things on earth; we shall fly mortal sin more than death, and venial sin with all our strength;

and in order to merit the reward promised by our Lord to the servants of the poor, we shall apply ourselves to acquire the Christian virtues of humility, simplicity and charity, as the appropriate spirit of our Institute.

"Moreover, we are enjoined a horror of the maxims of this world, a love of the maxims of Jesus Christ: consequently, a love of mortification; a despising of ourselves and of the things of the earth; a preference of low and repugnant employments, of the last place, and of what others refuse; detachment as regards places, employments and persons, a disposition to quit all at the voice of obedience; a patience that loves inconveniences, contradictions, mockeries and calumnies; great confidence in Providence, abandoning ourselves to it as an infant to its nurse.

"Servants of the poor, we shall honor the poverty of our Lord by living poorly ourselves. We shall have all things in common, after the example of the first Christians. We shall neither ask nor refuse anything for ourselves, leaving all our wants to the solicitude of the office bearers of our Community. We shall live and shall

dress in a uniform manner, and after the model of the Mother-house. Sick, we shall content ourselves in every respect with the ordinary fare and treatment of the poor; for servants ought not to be better treated than their masters.

"Our principal employment being to serve the sick poor, we shall serve them as Jesus Christ Himself, with as much cordiality, respect and devotion, even the most troublesome and the most disagreeable. This service we shall prefer even to our spiritual exercises. We shall take care of the souls as well as of the bodies of the poor we serve. As to material aid and the distribution of alms, we shall act conformably with the instructions that will have been given us, or with the will of the donors. We shall not attend on the rich, unless in case of absolute necessity, and even then, according to our Institute, we shall take care that the poor be served first."

Is it any wonder that women animated by such motives should evoke the admiration even of those who are not of our faith? Listen to these words of the Solicitor

General of Great Britain, Mr. Dowse, M.P., later a Baron of the Exchequer. He is speaking of the Mater Misericordia Hospital, Dublin, founded in 1861.

"It is not only a work of charity, but of Christian charity, — Christian in the noblest and truest signification of the term. The relief of the poor, the sick, and needy is particularly the glory of Christianity. Sophists may tell us that many of the maxims of Christ are to be found scattered up and down the pages of heathen authors; yet it is to Christ and His divine Spirit alone that all the blessings of Christian civilization are due; and Christianity alone can organize such a system of beneficence, one of the proofs of which we have here before us today. This resolution solicits the people of all denominations to assist in the good work so auspiciously begun.

"As a Protestant, I feel pride and pleasure in taking part in this work, for in this place relief is administered to all, without consideration of sect or party. The only passport required in this hospital is that the person applying should need its shelter and assistance. The blessed Preacher of

our religion says we should love our neighbor as ourselves. When asked who is our neighbor, He teaches us by that sublime parable of the Good Samaritan that our neighbor is not alone the man who worships at the same altar with us, who inhabits the same city, or who speaks the same language, but the man who needs assistance, no matter from whence he comes, or what his creed may be."

This is praise indeed, coming as it does from a non-Catholic.

Concerning this same hospital, I quote from the Report to the Government on the Hospitals of the United Kingdom, by J. S. Bristowe, M.D.:

"This hospital promises, in our opinion, to be, when complete, one of the finest hospitals in Europe. It is built on the corridor plan; but the distribution of corridors and wards and beds is such as to entirely neutralize any ill effects that could possibly flow from the adoption of this plan, while all the advantages that spacious, cheerful, well ventilated corridors afford are thoroughly secured.

"The hospital is kept scrupulously clean,

and its ventilation, and indeed all its internal arrangements, seem admirable. Patients are admitted without any recommendation other than the fitness of the case for admission, and all classes of disease are eligible, except infectious fevers."

I have chosen these citations from among thousands because of the official character of the statements.

In our own country, the greatest enthusiasts over the work of the Social Service Sisterhoods are those outside the Church. Not that our own do not appreciate it. But we are so accustomed to it, and it seems so natural for us to expect everything best from the Sisters, that we are not astonished at it.

Those not of our faith are surprised and puzzled at the heroic devotion of the Little Sisters of the Poor, and the many other Sisterhoods like them. But we Catholics know the source of their inspiration and their strength. Jesus Christ is their Brother; rather, He is their Spouse. No maiden ever loved her lover as these Sisters love their Lover, Jesus Christ. And it is not a romantic or sentimental affair. It is

based on substantial grounds and is as enduring as life. They have the realization of the personal presence of our Lord at their side.

I once said to an old Nun, who was caring for a cancer patient: "Well, Sister, how do you keep at it all the while?" to which she replied: "I only wish I could do more."

And that is it. They love. They love the Lord. Jesus Christ is not for them an abstraction. He is the reality of realities. They say with St. Paul: "I live, no not I, but Jesus Christ in me." Jesus is a living personality for them. He is at their side. They talk to Him a hundred times a day. It is as natural for them to tell Him their troubles as it is for a child to confide in its mother. It is as easy for them to do a service for Him as it is for a beloved one to serve her lover.

Most non-Catholics do not understand that. It is all mysterious to them. But the eyes of faith see aright. As the X-ray discloses things otherwise hidden, so does the faith-ray. In the light of faith, they realize that they are the brides of Christ. As such, they delight to do what pleases

Him. What that is He has declared: "Amen, I say to you, as often as you do it to the least of my brethren, you do it unto me."

The Social Service Sisterhoods do not limit themselves to the relief of bodily ailments and conditions. In a separate chapter, entitled The Teaching Sisterhoods, will be seen what a wonderful work for uplift the Sisters are doing in parochial schools and in academies and colleges. That is true social service work, but it is not so considered generally. Most people consider social service only what is directed to the betterment of the unfortunate and neglected.

There are Sisterhoods devoted exclusively to the education of the very poor. As this is rated by all among the social service activities, I give herewith an abstract from the Rules of one of the Orders devoted entirely to this kind of work.

DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO A SISTERHOOD ENGAGED IN TEACHING ONLY POOR CHILDREN

"1. The Sisters, besides the principal and general end of all Religious Orders, such

as particularly attending to the perfecting of themselves in the way of the Lord, must also have in view what is peculiarly characteristic of this Institute, that is, a most serious application to the instruction of poor children in the principles of Religion and Christian piety. In undertaking this very arduous, but meritorious task, the Sisters, whom God is graciously pleased to call to this state of perfection, shall encourage themselves and animate their fervour and zeal, by the example of their Divine Master, who testified on all occasions a tender love for little children, expressed the greatest pleasure on their approaching Him, and declareth that: Whosoever receiveth these little ones in His name, receiveth Himself. They shall also consider that in cultivating the tender minds of young children, by impressing on them a horror for vice and the love for virtue, and by instructing them in the duties of religion, they are associated to the functions of those heavenly spirits, whom God has appointed guardian angels, to watch over and direct them in the ways of eternal salvation.

2. It is a duty incumbent on the Sisters

to teach the children daily the Catechism, which they shall explain to them briefly and simply, adapting their language to the age and capacity of the children.

3. They shall teach the children to offer themselves up to God from the first use of reason, and, when they awake in the morning, to raise up their hearts to Him, adore His Sovereign Majesty, return thanks to Him for all His favours, and arm themselves with the sign of the cross. They shall instruct them how to offer all their thoughts, words, and actions to God's glory, implore His grace to know and love Him, and to fulfil His commandments, how they are to examine their consciences every night, and to honour and respect their parents.

4. They shall teach them how to prepare for confession, and to confess their sins with all sincerity and contrition. They shall be ever attentive to dispose them for the Sacrament of Confirmation and for their first Communion.

5. As the Poor are the main object and particular end of this pious Institute, it is hereby enacted as a statute, inviolably to be observed, that the Sisters of this re-

ligious Institute shall admit none into their schools but poor children; nor can they receive money or any other temporal emolument for instruction, contenting themselves with the glorious retribution promised to those who instruct many to justice."

Can any possible system of uplift surpass that described above? Could any but a divine Church foster a body of women so disinterested, magnanimous and heroic as those rules call for!

Another form of uplift which may be classed as social service is that of supplying women, busy with the occupations of life, the opportunity of retiring apart for prayer, meditation and spiritual strength. There is an Order called Our Lady of the Cenacle, whose object is shown by the following extract from their Book of Instructions:

"Principal among our activities are Spiritual Retreats, so often extolled and recommended by the Sovereign Pontiffs, and which our Holy Father, Pope Pius X, vouchsafed in private audience to encourage as the best of all means for renewing the Christian spirit in modern society, so unsettled in its faith.

"The houses of the Cenacle are constantly open to women and girls of every class of society who wish to devote themselves for some days to reflecting on the truths of salvation, to quiet and prayer, whether they wish to take counsel of the Holy Ghost before determining upon their future state, or whether desirous of disposing themselves for receiving the Sacraments, or feeling conscious of the necessity of adopting a more Christian tone in their lives.

"General retreats are given at fixed times; special, or even private, retreats take place during the course of the year, according to the convenience of individuals.

"The apostolate of the Cenacle by no means restricts itself to these two main works of catechising and retreats. Passing beyond the cloister, it lends a helping hand to every good work which has for its object the spread of the faith, of that faith which works through charity. 'The Cenacle is a hearth; whosoever draws nigh shares in its heat, and then imparts what he has truly received.'

"All these apostolates, sanctioned by the authority of the Holy See and enriched

with indulgences, are placed under the protection of Our Lady, who in the Cenacle, as formerly in Jerusalem, is ever the model, the support, the joy of souls."

All social workers agree that the only way to effect permanent good is by instruction. To relieve a condition without at the same time pointing out the way to avoid it is almost loss of time. It is to effect permanent good that the Cenacle conducts these retreats. In a retreat, one sees one's soul as you may see your body. If the soul is right, the whole life is right. Right thinking, correct views, proper and powerful incentives make the soul right. A retreat supplies all that.

The Social Service Sisterhoods are doing their work quietly, efficiently. Their benefit to our country is incalculable. When we realize that the Sisters number among us almost a hundred thousand, we can see that they are truly the Army of the Lord.

As a very recent example of the Social Service Sisterhoods, I may point to the Order founded in 1889 by Katherine Drexel, of Philadelphia. A member of one of the

richest and most distinguished families of the United States, Miss Drexel, with the true Catholic instinct for uplift work, organized a body of women into a society to labor exclusively among the Indians and negroes of our country. To this work she consecrated her immense fortune and her very life. There were over 250,000 Indians sadly neglected as a field for her mission. And besides these were some 9,000,000 negroes, most of whom needed a helping and guiding hand.

That was a work which had no natural attraction, no human reward, no stimulus of notoriety. It called for a truly supernatural motive. It was a sacrifice which only a divine purpose could actuate. Such an undertaking could not be the product of any human religion, for it meant the dedication under vow of one's entire life to the exclusive service of the Indians and negroes. It was a manifestation of the Church's attitude during all the ages towards the neglected.

Certain works of charity attract by their glamour. They become a fad. Society takes them up as a distraction. Some good people join in the work out of senti-

ment or passing pity. There are other works of benevolence which appeal in times of war and calamity. They are always accompanied by wonderful incentives of a human kind.

But to labor all one's life, hidden away from the eyes of others, leading a hard life of toil and privation, and among a class of people more or less ignored by others, that is a divine life. That is social service that counts. And that is the kind of uplift work the Catholic Sisterhoods engage in.

The Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament have founded schools, academies and teachers' training schools among the negroes and Indians. They live among these people, visit them in their homes and reservations, nurse them, instruct them in manual and useful trades, and in countless ways take the place of a mother, a refined, Christian mother.

That is real social service. That is uplift work of the right sort. That is the kind of service the Church has been rendering to mankind from the beginning. All Europe was overrun by barbarians after the fall of the Roman Empire. These

barbarians eventually became the civilized nations of Europe. It was the Catholic Church that made them so. She is and always has been the greatest Social Service Order in the world.

XII

SISTERHOODS FOR RECLAIMING THE WAYWARD AND UNFORTUNATE

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Sighs and tears my sorrow speak,
Shame and grief are on my cheek,
Mercy, mercy, Lord, I seek!

Mary was by Thee forgiven,
To the thief Thou openedst heaven;
Hope to me, too, Thou hast given.
Dies Iræ

JESUS CHRIST WAS THE FIRST Rescue Worker of humanity. He rescued Magdalen from the streets. He snatched the Penitent Thief from the precipice. And what He rescued, He was not ashamed of. He made Magdalen the companion of His Mother. He made the Thief a saint in Paradise. He came for sinners. "As I live, saith the Lord, I will not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live."

There are certain sinners today who

are outcasts. Society claims that the social evil, as it calls it, is necessary. But the poor frail creatures who are necessary for the social evil it brands and discards. A woman has her youth and beauty but once. If she sacrifice it to the social evil, it is gone, and no future is before her but a darksome and loathsome existence.

The wages of sin is death. That we know. Every sinner will testify to it. But God is a God of mercy. It is above all His works. A humble and contrite heart He will not reject. Society rejects the fallen woman. God does not. His Church does not. As he reclaimed Magdalen, so His Church today reclaims countless Magdalens. He was the first Good Shepherd. He left the ninety and nine to go in search of the one that strayed. His Church does the same.

A few years ago the following occurrence came to my knowledge. A good girl from a good home held a position at seven dollars a week in a department store in one of our large cities. Her family was poor. Her seven dollars did not help much, as she had to pay car fare and buy her lunch and dress neatly. But something was left

at the end of the week, and that was better than nothing.

There were no pleasures in her life, nothing but a hard grind, day in and day out. She was pretty, she was brought up well, and was careful of the pitfalls that are in the way of young girls. One of the managers of the store, a married man, marked her out as his prey. He was very kind to her, advanced her, gave her nice goods at a nominal price, and in many ways ingratiated himself in her favor.

She was only human. She liked a good time and dress, as girls do. Soon he took her to lunch. She told her mother. The mother put her on her guard. Gradually the guard broke down. He lived in the suburbs and stated he was not married. She went to the theatre with him. The mother took his word that his intentions were honorable, and did not object.

Then came the inevitable. Soon the girl realized she was to become a mother. The man now scorned her. A new face caught his fancy. Her mother had trusted her, believed in her virtue, and if she knew her daughter had gone bad it would have almost killed her. The daughter knew that.

The girl soon suspected that everyone knew she was bad. She dreaded going to the store. She hated to go home. She would have been glad to die. In her distress she forgot about God. The wages of sin is death. She was now morally dead. Her soul was dead. She gave up her position because it was unendurable. She told her mother she had an out-of-town position and left home.

Now, of course, it will occur to many that the right thing to have done was to make a confidant of her mother. There would be an explosion, but that would settle down, and the mother would become her best friend. But girls in her position do not do the right thing. They do the desperate. Had she spoken to a priest, he could have directed her for her good. But a girl in shame does not consult anybody.

She nursed her disgrace and it grew. Finally, it overpowered her. She made for the river. She got afraid. Suicide terrified her. She was on the wrong way — why not see it through? She had heard women talk of certain matters, and decided to see a doctor. But she had no money.

She took to the streets, fell in with a bad set, and was now a fallen woman.

But she hated the life. However, what could she do? Good people sitting comfortably at home may suggest many solutions. But this girl was not living comfortably at home. She was a victim of the social evil, an evil that men consider necessary. Catholic Ireland never considered it necessary. It was unknown there. But the Church of God was guiding that people. This girl, the child of Catholic Irish parents was now a toy of the social evil. A toy? A victim!

For a few years she led that degraded life, until she fell so low that she did not know or care how low she was. She had given her youth and beauty. Now they were gone. They were no longer an asset. She was often without a room or food, she was in rags, — an outcast.

Did the society that made her such give her a thought? Perhaps. She was in the way, a nuisance. She was picked up by the police. Old in vice, she was still young, but haggard. Next day she stood before a kindly judge. It was her first arrest. "Your religion?" he asked.

"Catholic." "Six months in the House of the Good Shepherd." It was all the same to her, Good Shepherd, jail, or anything else. She was given into the custody of a motherly woman. There were no cheap pitying phrases or anything like that from the woman, but only: "Come, dear," and a warm clasp of the hand.

That clasp and that sweet word were like heaven. It was the first she got since she left her mother. The good woman was a volunteer worker of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. She was their hand reaching out into the brambles for the sheep that was bleeding and famished. Imbued with their kind spirit, she knew what to do and how to do it. The hand would soon place the torn sheep in the bosom of the Shepherd, who would fondly carry it back to the fold.

They arrive at the convent gate. A lay-Sister opens the door. There is no surprise shown, nothing to make the bleeding sheep bleed more. The woman of the streets was now in a cloistered convent, a hallowed place. Light steps are heard, and a Nun all garbed in spotless white approaches. A blue girdle encircles her waist,

and a crucifix and a large silver heart hangs suspended on her breast. Pure as snow, she hesitates not to put out her arms to the miserable creature before her.

And then with few but heartfelt words she calls her "My child," and tells her that she is very dear to God, and that God came for her especially, and that she must go back to Him, and that they are going to help her. More by her manner than by her words, the Nun reassures her and makes her feel that she is not entirely abandoned.

That is only the beginning. Gently, quietly, Christlike, the good Nuns first gain her confidence, learn her history, and then by their devoted interest in her, awaken early instincts and start her on the way to good womanhood. They show how the Good Shepherd came for just such as she was. They tell her of the prodigal welcomed back by the loving Father. And they end by creating in her a desire to stand right with God again.

She asks for a priest, makes a good confession, receives God's assurance that the guilt of the past is wiped out, and desires

now to do something for the Lord to show her gratitude. In this spirit she takes her detention and her work as penance for her sins. Cheerfully and hopefully she lives on under the guidance and help of the Sisters, and soon she is a new creature. The past is past. She needed a start. She could not get it in the world. She got it from the Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

Her six months are up. She is free to return to the city or go where she pleases. If she returns to the city again, she feels she will fall no more. She is strengthened in Christ. But she decides that her life has been misspent and that her remaining years should be spent only in well-doing. How may she best do that? She decides to be a Magdalene. And what is that?

Before I go on to tell you of this and other things in connection with the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd, I wish to pause a moment and ask you to reflect a bit. That was a brand plucked from the burning. There was a noble soul in that defiled body. God says: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose the soul?" Her body was broken and her soul was worse. There was no

rescuing hand but that of the Good Shepherd.

Jesus Christ walks abroad today as truly as He did two thousand years ago. "I am with you all days to the end of the world," He declared. He is with us, not only in the Blessed Eucharist, not only in the forgiving Sacrament of Penance, but also in the lives of those angels of mercy who seek the lost sheep, pick it up, hold it to their bosom, and carry it back to the fold.

The Nuns of the Good Shepherd are women of noble, beautiful and delicate natures. Some of the most refined and wealthy women of the land have left cultured homes to dedicate their lives and energies to the work of reclaiming their fallen sisters. Jesus is their model. He, the pure and holy One, did not hesitate to consort with sinners in order to win them. He did not consider that their contact was defilement. He was called the Friend of sinners. Not that He wanted sinners but He wanted their reform.

One day a woman taken in adultery was brought to our Lord. Her accusers looked for a speedy condemnation of her. But

Jesus was the Good Shepherd. He came for the lost sheep. He had also declared that not he who is well needs the physician, but he who is ill. He was the great Physician. The poor wretch now before Him was indeed a pitiable object. Pride and pity do not go together. The accusing Pharisees were proud. They had no pity for this unfortunate.

But Christ was meek and humble. He was purity itself. Therefore He had pity on this fallen woman. He was God. He saw the hearts of those who pointed the finger of scorn at this outcast. Their hearts were black. The sin they were shocked at in this woman stained their own souls. Hypocrites!

God hates sin, but He loves the sinner. He died for the sinner, the repentant sinner. This woman was repentant. As soon as she came in His presence, something gave her a horror of sin and of her sinful self. Christ saw her repentance and became her friend. Her defender, too. The accusers were not repentant of their sins. Jesus saw that. Turning to them, by a divine strategy, He said: "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." Then, as

they still clamored for her destruction, He quietly wrote in the sand the great sin of each, beginning with the eldest. One by one they slunk away.

At last the woman stood alone. And Jesus said to her: "Woman, where are they that accuse thee? Hath no man condemned thee? Who said: No man, Lord. And Jesus said: Neither will I condemn thee. Go, and now sin no more" (John 8: 10). And we may believe that she never sinned again.

It is not indifference to sin that make the Good Shepherd Nuns the friends of sinners. It is because of their appreciation of what sin is, of what it cost the Son of God, and of what it means for all eternity to those who die in it, that the Good Shepherd Nuns are active in the welfare of the outcast.

A diamond is as valuable in a lump of clay as it is on the crown of a monarch. Christ calls the soul the pearl of great price. He valued it so much that He left heaven for it. The Good Shepherd Nuns leave home and kindred, and, after the example of Christ, seek out the sinner and try to save what was lost.

If you are looking for the divine on earth, go to a convent of the Good Shepherd and see those noble ladies wearing away their lives on what the world despises and rejects. By prayer and penance and sympathy and devoted work, they take what society would otherwise throw into jails or reformatories and transform them into good, serviceable, self-respecting women.

Yea, more, they often help them to become saints. They open the door of a convent to them if they wish to enter. Many do. Not into the Good Shepherd Order do they receive them. Not that they fear association with them, but because by the nature of the work done by the Good Shepherd Nuns, they must be like unto the Good Shepherd Himself, spotless. But they have provided within their own walls a special Sisterhood for reformed women who wish to consecrate their lives to God for the remainder of their days. These penitent women may, if they wish, become real Sisters, true Religious, with sacred vows, in the Order of the Magdalenes.

What a transition from the brothel to the cloister! But not so great a transi-

tion as Jesus made in Magdalen's case, when He made her the companion of His own Mother. And when Jesus was breathing His last on the cross, there stood at its foot Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalen.

Is not that Church in which there is such an Order as that of the Good Shepherd the true Church of Christ? What other Church reaches out and cares for the lost sheep as does the Catholic Church? And that not here and there, or in this century or that, but everywhere and always. Not merely as individual effort, the result of impulse or occasional philanthropy, but as an arm of the service, a recognized instrumentality of continuous activity and sacrifice.

As a type of these organizations for rescue work, I take the Good Shepherd Order, and give here some account of its nature and activities.

The object of the Order is threefold: To preserve young girls from evil; to reform women of evil life; and to superintend an Order called the Magdalenes, wherein women who have reformed may do penance and perform good works for

the rest of their lives. Some people think that the Magdalenes are a branch of the Good Shepherd Order. That is not so. There is no passing from the penitents to the Good Shepherd Order. They may become Magdalenes. And there is no passing from the Magdalenes to the Good Shepherd Sisterhood.

The Good Shepherd Order is cloistered and follows the rule of St. Augustine. Besides the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, they take a fourth vow, to devote themselves to the rescue and uplift of unfortunate and fallen women. There is hardly anything so divine on earth as that. Some of the very highest society ladies have consecrated themselves to this blessed and heroic charity.

In the Order are three grades: the Choir Sisters, who recite the Divine Office and attend to the instruction and administration of the penitents; the Lay-Sisters, who attend to the household duties; and the Outside Sisters, who look after things outside the convent.

The habit for all, except the Outside Sisters, is white with a blue girdle. Hanging from the neck and displayed in front

is a large silver heart. On one side of it is engraved the figure of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and on the other the Blessed Mother. The Sisterhood is especially devoted and dedicated to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Besides the silver heart, they also wear a crucifix displayed on the habit.

The object of the Order is the rescue of girls from the danger of immorality, and the reform of those who have gone astray. The convent also affords a shelter to any unfortunate woman who applies for admission.

To carry on their work, they have three departments or classes, the first of which is the Preservates, — young girls abandoned by their parents or neglected by them. These are placed in a building apart. They are educated in the same manner as in the regular schools, but besides, are taught how to be good and useful women. Above all, they are thoroughly instructed in their religion and its practices.

The next class is that of the Penitents. This consists of women of immoral lives who have come of their own accord to seek shelter; and of the same kind of women

committed by the courts. It embraces, therefore, those who come voluntarily and those who are there under compulsion by sentence of the civil magistrates. Most judges know the wonderful good accomplished by the Sisters, and whenever they have the opportunity, commit a culprit to the Good Shepherd Nuns rather than to imprisonment.

These Penitents afford the most gratifying sight that the human eye can behold; also the most marvellous. Most of them, under the tender influence of the Sisters, yield to grace and become lilies of virtue. It is not an uncommon thing for every one of them to go to Holy Communion every Sunday. Some receive every day! As Penitents, they hear Mass every morning, listen to spiritual reading during the day, say the rosary, and profit by the edifying lives and conversation of the Sisters. If there be any uplift or reclamation on earth comparable to that, I should like to see it pointed out.

I could give many instances of holiness among the Penitents, but I must hasten on to the third class, that of the Magdalenes. This is a real Sisterhood, a Religious Order.

They take vows and follow the rule of the Third Order of Mt. Carmel. Their life consists of prayer, penance and manual labor. Many of this class reach a high degree of sanctity. All those who are Magdalenes become so of their own accord.

Those of the Penitents who wish to consecrate their lives forever to God may apply for admission to the Magdalenes. But the application is not all. They must furthermore undergo a long period of probation, and show that they have a vocation to the Religious Life. Before they take their vows, they must give evidence of very solid virtue and of a firm and persevering disposition. Besides receiving members from the Penitents, the Magdalenes get many subjects from outside. Any fallen woman who repents of her evil life and wishes to dedicate herself to penance, prayer and virtue, may make application for admittance.

Some of the Magdalenes, who have risen to the loftiest heights of holiness, were at one time vile outcasts, spurned by men and women. To see these women living as saints is indeed a sight for men and angels. There is nothing on this

earth more divine. If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that does penance, who can say what rapture there must be at the sight of these numerous souls living as angels, souls that formerly were the slaves of sin!

This work for the rescue of the young, the reform of the fallen, and the sanctification of the reformed, is going on in all our large cities. It takes heroic virtue to consecrate one's life to that element of humanity. It is altogether and absolutely a divine vocation.

Here and there you might find a soul that would be touched with pity for these unfortunates, and labor for their reclamation. But to leave all the pleasures and comforts of life and devote all one's energies and efforts to these outcasts, and that as long as life lasts, that is more than human. And when we see not one, but a multitude of delicate and cultured women consecrate themselves unreservedly to that work, we must recognize in it the grace of God.

In order that you may understand the motive and the sustaining power of the Good Shepherd Sisters, I shall put before you some extracts from their Constitution.

"The object of the Sisterhood of the Good Shepherd is to serve and honor God by the faithful observance of the holy Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, and by a perfect imitation of all the other virtues of our Lord and His Most Holy Mother. But the immediate and special end of the Daughters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, and one which distinguishes them from others, is to imitate, as far as they can, by the assistance of divine grace, the most ardent charity with which the most loving Heart of Jesus, the Son of Mary, and that of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are inflamed towards souls created to the image and likeness of God, and redeemed by the Precious Blood of His Son; employing themselves with all their hearts, by the example of a holy life, by the fervour of their prayers, and by the efficacy of their instructions, in the conversion of the girls and women who have fallen into the disorder of a licentious life, and who, being moved by God, desire to leave the state of sin, and to do penance under their direction, and learn more easily the means of serving His Divine Majesty, and saving their souls. For as in the

Church of God there are Religious who attend hospitals, and are destined to take care of the body in sickness, so it is very necessary there should be Religious whose convents serve as hospitals in which they can receive souls which are sick, and labour for the recovery of their spiritual health.

"But in order to devote themselves with more affection and courage to the performance of the duties of this holy Institute, it is necessary that those who embrace it should often reflect upon the following truths:

NAMELY

"I. It is the greatest service and the highest honour that they can offer to God, and the most pleasing to His Divine Majesty of all the works which they can perform, because there is nothing He has so much at heart as the salvation of souls.

"II. It is a work that contains within itself, and by excellence, all the other good works, both spiritual and corporal, which can be practised, because the latter are only means to attain to the former, as to their ultimate object.

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"III. A soul is of more value than a whole world.

"IV. A single soul is more precious before God than all the bodies which are in the universe, and to make a soul pass from the death of sin to the life of grace is an action more agreeable to God than to raise to life all the bodies that are in the grave.

"V. According to St. Chrysostom, to labour for the salvation of souls in a true spirit of charity is better than to practise the greatest corporal austerities and mortifications.

"VI. According to the same Saint, to employ one's time and life in this blessed labour is more pleasing to the Divine Majesty than to suffer martyrdom; and this made St. Teresa say that she envied more the work of those who were engaged in this employment than she envied the martyrs.

"VII. According to St. Denis, of all things the most divine is to co-operate with God in the salvation of souls, especially of those who are abandoned and without help, since our Lord has said that He came to call, not the just, but sinners.

"VIII. It is for this object that our

Institute has been founded and established in the Church; and the Sisters have not entered our Congregation to save themselves alone, but to co-operate in the salvation of souls, in the manner which shall be prescribed to them by obedience.

"IX. It is a very special grace for them and an extraordinary favour of heaven, of which they are utterly unworthy, to be associated in this work with our Lord Jesus Christ, with His Most Holy Mother, with His Apostles, and with so many great saints. They should embrace with affection all the sufferings and difficulties which are to be met with in their vocation, for love of Him who suffered so many outrages in this same cause, and by this means endeavour to become true daughters of Our Lady of Charity and of the Good Shepherd."

The great preacher De Ravignan thus refers to the blessed mission of the Good Shepherd Nuns:

"To bring ONE soul, — no matter how black and guilty, — to the loving, yearning Heart of Jesus, is worth all the best actions

of your whole life put together. Think of the GREAT PRICE paid for its redemption!

"To look after one's own salvation EXCLUSIVELY is, no doubt, good: but so narrow are our poor, petty minds, that there is selfishness even here, and selfishness, above all other things, is opposed to everything we know of our meek, tender and forgiving Redeemer. HIS WHOLE LIFE WAS SPENT IN SACRIFICE AND SOLICITUDE, and all for the poor erring, wandering, wayward sinner. Think of the stories of the Prodigal, of Magdalen, and the Penitent Thief, and how clear this fact must then appear! His last prayer, while suffering the most terrific torture on the infamous gibbet, was for pity and forgiveness for His very murderers, so anxious was He to secure their souls! Love of souls and their salvation has ever been the unfailing sign of saints.

"Never think it is too late to touch a soul. One more prayer, one more appeal, tender and strong, too: one more sacrifice offered in silence, may prove to be the trumpet that shall level the walls of Jericho.

"I will never despair of the salvation of

any soul. It may have forgotten God or fallen in the way, or even have wished to write the warrant of its own condemnation, but, God be praised! no soul can be happy in trying to escape from Him."

Another great servant of God, one who was instrumental in the foundation of the Good Shepherd work, speaks as follows:

"Judge not. Despair not of any soul, whatever may be its lapses. You know not its secrets, its struggles, its prayers. A right word may rouse its latent energies, and a simple incident may give force to the wing of right resolutions, when discipline, dangers, and the most solemn events have failed.

"Let us remember that it would not be so meritorious to free ALL the poor souls detained in purgatory as to rescue ONE from the state of mortal sin, even if this soul should not remain in the state of grace."

Recently I came across a little poem. As the lines graphically portray the life and work of these true Rescue Workers, I conclude the subject with them:

'Mid the silent hush of the cloister,
Where vesper anthems swell,
In deeds of love and kindness,
A band of virgins dwell.

In robes of creamy whiteness,
As pure as the forms they enfold,
Shedding a lustre around them
More fair than the brightest gold.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Here follow the Master's call,
Cheering the weak and lowly,
And breathing peace to all.

Praying the weak and tempted
To shun the path of sin,
Their doors are ever open
To let the wanderer in.

In hearts all torn and bleeding
They pour the balm of love,
Whispering words of comfort
As angels whisper above.

Like a cluster of sweet-scented flowers
They wear their young lives away,
Laying them down for their Master
In charity's mission each day.

Till wasted, wan and exhausted,
They sink to rise no more;
A whispered prayer, a sigh of love,
Then death, and all is o'er.

As the lily closes its petals
When fades the light of day,
Only to ope on the morrow,
More pure, more fair than to-day,

So ends their earthly mission,
Sealed with their Master's kiss;
Only to wake in heaven
To everlasting bliss.

They pass through death's dark portals
Without a shadow of fear,
Whilst from the lips of Jesus
These blessed words they hear!

"Well done, My Spouse, My Sister!
The crown is prepared for thee,
For what thou hast done for those little ones,
That thou hast done unto Me."

XIII

THE TEACHING SISTERHOODS

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SOMETIMES YOU HEAR PEOPLE say: "We understand why a person should become a Sister in an Order that cares for the sick or the aged or the orphan, but why do they need to become Sisters to teach?" Such persons consider that teaching is an ordinary profession, well filled by lay people, and not at all necessitating the sacrifice required by a Sisterhood.

They rightly associate a Nun's career with sacrifice and heroism, and they do not see anything about teaching that calls for such exalted and extraordinary virtue. Teaching they consider to be one of the ordinary professions, and, as such, should be left to ordinary people of the world.

Teaching may be an ordinary profession. It may also be a very extraordinary profession. It depends on what you teach. If you teach just worldly things, no matter how well, teaching is an ordinary profession. But if you teach along with worldly

branches the things that make for eternal life, teaching is not an ordinary profession. Teaching then becomes an apostolate. It assumes the dignity of a mission.

Jesus Christ was a teacher. He was The Teacher. Teaching was mainly His mission. In His day there were many teachers, some ordinary, some celebrated. They were merely teachers. But He was a teacher who taught the things of the soul, of the future life, of God. That made His teaching a mission. He was the first Christian Missioner. He was the first Christian apostle. The Sister who teaches after the manner He taught is an apostle. If she teaches in His way and the things He taught, she is a true missioner.

The teaching Sisterhoods teach what Christ taught. The teaching Sisterhoods have the same purpose that Christ had. The teaching Sisterhoods exercise an apostolate similar to Christ's.

Of all agencies employed by the Church of God to carry on the work of Jesus Christ, none is more essential than teaching. Abolish the religious school, and soon there would be little need of our churches, — they would be empty. The children of

today are the men of tomorrow, and if today they receive no religious instruction, tomorrow they will attend no religious service. And well do the enemies of religion realize that. In every attack on the Church, the hardest blow has been struck at the Christian school. Irreligion knows that if it has the child, it has the man. And so does the Church.

Hence the great effort of the Church to provide Christian schools for the young. It is no easy thing for a struggling pastor to maintain a school. But he knows that his church will suffer if he does not. The school often entails more care and effort on the pastor's part than the Church. But he knows its importance. At all cost and at every sacrifice he maintains the school. Experience has taught the necessity of this. Hence we see, even in a struggling parish, the parochial school. Parents, too, realize the need of the Catholic school, and they cheerfully make the sacrifices necessary for it.

This solicitude for the faith of the child is a Catholic instinct. All the schools of Europe grew up around the Church. For long centuries there were no schools except

those attached to the monasteries and churches. It was the Church that kept education alive in those epochs when Goth and Vandal and Hun devastated Europe. Everything was laid waste. Towns and cities were wiped out. Civilization itself was often threatened. It was kept alive in the Church schools. All education in Europe was Catholic for centuries. All the great universities were Catholic foundations. Oxford and Cambridge and Paris and Salamanca and Rome were Catholic establishments.

Then came the great upheaval which divided Europe into two camps. God raised up a great teaching Order to stem the tide of naturalism. The Church, with the wisdom of God, perceived that the maintenance of the supernatural religion of Jesus Christ depended on the education of youth. That became the battle line. To it rushed volunteers from every walk of life. Devoted men and women consecrated their lives to the same task that Jesus Christ engaged in, when, as the Teacher in Israel, He instructed many unto eternal life.

Teaching, which was always a character-

istic of the Church's life, now became a special mission. A mission it is as truly as that to foreign countries, to pagans and savages. For it aims primarily at the souls of men. Man is not merely mortal; he is also immortal. His education must fit him, not only for his mortal career, but above all for his immortal.

And that is the mission of the Teaching Orders. While neglecting nothing that equips the young for the duties and opportunities of this life, they moreover prepare them for their eternal destiny. They inculcate what our Lord insisted on: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven." Without omitting anything that the needs of life require, they provide the helps and means which lead to success in the life beyond.

And that is the great thing. He has told us so who knows. Jesus Christ Himself declared: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" He that said that knew the value of the soul and its salvation. If God be with us, what matters it if the entire world is against us? And it is God Himself who sets a valuation on the soul which makes it more worth than all else besides.

It is this priceless jewel of the soul to which the Teaching Orders consecrate their lives and efforts. Jesus consecrated His life to the welfare of man's soul and sacrificed His life for it. He ministered unto the bodies of men, it is true, but only to reach their souls. He often declared that. And in the same way, the Teaching Orders minister unto the minds and bodies of the young in order to reach their souls. In this they are co-workers with Christ in His apostolate.

It is true they need not be Sisters in order to teach. Our cities are filled with teachers, and good teachers, who are not Sisters. But to teach as apostles of Christ they need to be Sisters. If they want to be His disciples and work in His spirit, they must belong to His ministry. I know very well that there are many good, pious women who are not Sisters, teaching in our schools. They are doing a splendid work for the souls and minds of their pupils. God bless them for it!

But what they do here and there, as individuals, and with restrictions and limitations, the Sisters do always and everywhere and with no restrictions. For their

very profession is to educate in Christ's way. Moreover, their whole object and aim in life is to do good to others for the love of their Master. They take up teaching, not as an occupation nor an expedient, but as a life's work. They consecrate themselves to it. They minister in the class-room as the priest does at the altar. They are ambassadors of Christ, carrying His message and directions to those in their charge. Every branch of ordinary learning which is taught by others, they teach just as well, often better, and besides, they impart that other instruction which only they know how to convey. For they are living the truths which they teach.

Character is the great teacher. Character is life. One is what one lives. And the Sisters live the life of the Spirit. They form themselves on their Model, Jesus Christ. Daily meditation on His life makes their lives more and more like His. That enables them to instruct in His spirit. It gives a meaning and unction to their words which otherwise they would not have.

Association forms character. The Sisters, by their companionship with Jesus in prayer, meditation and holy Commu-

nion, form their characters on His. In turn they impart that character to the little ones with whom they associate. That is the secret of the charm and efficiency of the Teaching Sisters. How often have I heard men say of a young lady that she must be a pupil of the Sisters, on account of an indescribable something which characterized her.

Not every pupil of a convent school is all that she should be. Not every child of good parents is what she should be. But speaking generally, the convent bred girl, and the pupil, boy or girl, of our parochial schools, is vastly better than he or she would be under any other form of education. Effort and example may be lost on some. That is not the fault of the effort or the example, but of the one who profits not thereby.

There was never a better teacher than Jesus. Yet Judas profited neither by His words nor example. But Jesus is nevertheless the Way, the Truth and the Life. And so the Teaching Sisterhoods, following in His footsteps, convey by their lives and words a lesson which is for their pupils the Way, the Truth and the Life.

What a glorious mission that is! To be associated with Jesus Christ in instructing many unto everlasting life. "They that instruct others unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity." Who are more entitled to that glorious destiny than the Sisters who give their lives to this instruction unto justice!

Oh, yes, I know there are many drawbacks and shortcomings among the Sisters and their work. But the Sisters are trying, and trying hard, always. In this country, the work has been so extensive that it was hard to keep up with it. Immigration multiplied the need of Sisters. To meet it, they undertook strenuous tasks and often overburdened themselves. So did Christ.

But gradually the Teaching Sisterhoods are coming into their own standard. Not that they have not done their work excellently, but here and there, owing to severe handicaps, they have not always accomplished the great good they aimed at. Wherever, of late years, the Teaching Sisters have come in competition with other schools, the advantage has been decidedly with the Sisters.

I know of one large city where it was

the custom to publish the results of the examinations of the Regents State Board. The superiority of the parochial children became so marked that the City School Board stopped the publication of the examinations. Recently in one parochial school in New York City, with an attendance of fourteen hundred pupils, and whose teachers are the Sisters of Charity, every member of the graduating class passed the Regents examination. When it is considered that this examination is by an outside Board, whose methods are unfamiliar to the pupils, it makes the record all the more wonderful.

Let me give here a few of the published results of that particular examination. The graduating class numbered 65 boys and girls, who were completing their eighth grade work. Without a single exception, they passed the rigorous requirements of the Regents. The subjects were penmanship, reading, spelling, geography, history, arithmetic and English grammar. They not only passed, but 75% of them took honors in a majority of the subjects in which they were examined. To pass with honor requires a mark of 90% or higher in any test set by the New York State

Board of Regents. So that three fourths of the class passed a majority of the examinations with a percentage of 90% or over, while the entire class passed most creditably in every subject.

That is an answer to those who would belittle the instruction given by our Teaching Sisters. Although that was an exceptionally fine record, it was very closely approached year after year. And what the Sisters of Charity were accomplishing there and elsewhere, the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Notre Dame and the Sisters of St. Joseph, and various other Orders, were doing in other parishes of this or other cities.

To confirm what I have recorded, I give herewith a report made by a New York School Inspector. It appeared some time ago on the editorial page of *The Sun*, New York.

"To the Editor of The Sun. Sir: — For more than twenty years I have been familiar with the public schools. As a school inspector, I have paid particular attention to methods and results. But until recently, I had never set foot in a Catholic

parochial school. When I did enter, it was with a feeling that it would be impossible to find anything to commend educationally, from a lay-man's point of view.

"Nothing is further from the truth than the assertion that the parochial schools teach only religion.

"Last summer, while 75% of the graduates of the parochial schools who presented themselves for examination for entrance into the normal college were admitted (and many with 'honor'), only 25% of the graduates of the public schools were successful. This summer, the Catholic percentage was higher.

"In all the parochial schools I visited, I was invited to examine the classes in any subject contained in the curriculum. Very few were below the standard, while the large majority *were superior to the public schools.*

"In the essentials, — penmanship, language (grammar), reading, arithmetic, history and geography, — the parochial schools seem to me to excel. They excel in drawing. The reason for the superiority of the parochial schools in these respects is simple. At the end of a school term (one

half year), no child is promoted to a higher grade unless the child has a mastery of the subjects taught in the grade in which he or she has been studying for that term. In the public schools, the aim is to get results in the shape of statistics. Fit or unfit, the child is pushed into a higher grade.

"As a rule, the parochial school pupils are better spellers and have a clearer idea of the meaning of the words than the average public school child.

"The parochial school children are fairly well acquainted with the geography of the world, so necessary in these days when the newspapers give such ample space to the current history of nations. They are well grounded in the history of their own country, with a good idea of the history of foreign countries, while their writing and arithmetic deserve the highest praise."

That report, coming from an outsider, speaks for itself. So much for efficiency.

Now as regards the purpose of the education given by the Teaching Orders and their success in attaining it, I quote the following from Bishop Burgess of the Epis-

copal Church. Coming from such a high Protestant authority, it will not be suspected of Catholic partiality.

"I have real regard for the Roman Catholic Church body, especially for the wonderful energy shown in it. In the sixteen years covered by the census, that body has shown an increase of six million members. That is an interesting statement. Do you realize that the parochial schools which are fostered by this Church are the biggest factors in this growth?

"In New York City alone, the Roman Catholic Church has parochial schools that have an aggregate of a hundred thousand pupils. There the children are taught the Christian truths as they have been received by the Roman Catholic Church. We are forced to realize that the real education force is the teaching of these truths, and all education must include religious teachings.

"Our Church would do well to establish such schools, and I hope that we may soon see the establishment of parochial schools. The children of the Roman Catholic schools learn loyalty to their religion and affec-

tion for their teachers. The public schools are a drawback to religion, as they give no religious teaching."

Is it any wonder that Catholics of the right sort love and cherish the Teaching Orders! When they win such praise from outside sources, it is indeed a confirmation that their mission is apostolic. And, thank God, most Catholics appreciate the great boon that the Sisters are to them.

Listen to an intelligent mother, who gave us her reasons for sending her six children to the parochial school. She was sneeringly asked by a worldly Catholic friend why she did not send her children to the public school. This was her reply!

"1. Because I think the Catholic schools do better teaching than the state schools;

2. Because the Sisters teach nice manners to their pupils;

3. Because I am too busy to instruct my children in their religion, and the Sisters do it for me;

4. Because my boys learn to be docile and obedient;

5. Because I have no difficulty in getting them to hear Mass on Sundays;

6. Because the children get school work to do at home, and I have them all around me in the evening, instead of scattered about the streets;

7. Because the children are so happy at school, and are so much attached to their teachers;

8. Because I wish my boys and girls to be good Catholics;

9. Because the Pope and the clergy tell me it is my duty;

10. Because I want my children to save their souls."

A short time ago, Mr. Ralph Adams Cram, in advocating state aid for religious schools, spoke as follows:

"As a professor of a technical institution, where I come in contact with upwards of two hundred young men in my own department in the course of a year, I can say that the products of the private schools, and specifically of the Roman Catholic parochial schools and colleges, compare at least favorably with their fellows of a different educational experience. This is true of character, as well as I can judge it in

three years of personal acquaintance. When it comes to a question of clear constructive thinking and clean-cut incisive expression, the products of the parochial schools generally stand first."

That is a very remarkable acknowledgment coming from a non-Catholic professor in a great New England college.

Bishop Greer, of the Protestant Episcopal Church, speaks thus on the necessity of teaching in the schools the very things which the Sisters insist on so much:

"We must have moral training, and that training must begin with the child. 'The child is father to the man,' and the Church that lives and works for the child will contribute most to the greatness of the future."

The late President Roosevelt strikingly asserts the same thing in the words which I here quote from him:

"There is no word in the English language more abused than the word 'education.' It is a fine thing to be clever, to be able, to be smart. But it is a better

thing to have the qualities that find their expression in the Decalogue and the Golden Rule. We must have education in the broadest and deepest sense, — education of the soul as well as of the mind. The future of this country depends on the way in which the boy and girl are brought up."

The Teaching Sisterhoods reach the soul. You see, therefore, what a glorious mission they are engaged in. What a career for those who are blessed with that sublime vocation!

Although the foregoing data referred mainly to parochial schools, we must not infer that the Teaching Orders limit their efforts to these schools only. Our country is filled with academies, seminaries and colleges conducted by the Teaching Orders. The Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Ursulines, the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of St. Joseph and the Sisters of Mercy, not to mention others, have splendidly equipped colleges, fully recognized by the State Board of Regents.

These educational establishments afford every facility and accommodation that the

most exacting may require. In the neighborhood of New York City alone there are four colleges conducted by the Teaching Sisterhoods. Manhattanville, in the very heart of the city, presents as fine a group of buildings and as excellent a course of studies as any college in the country. The Religious of the Sacred Heart have sent forth from these hallowed walls some of the most distinguished ladies in America's social life.

The Ursulines at New Rochelle, the Sisters of Charity at Mt. St. Vincent on the Hudson, and the Sisters of Charity at Madison, have collegiate establishments second to none in the land. Trinity College, Washington, should not go unmentioned, as it is the only Catholic college for women in the national Capital. The Sisters of Notre Dame have made Trinity College a monument to higher Catholic learning. The establishment and maintenance of all these educational activities signify sacrifice and service of a high degree.

In order that you may understand the spirit that animates the Teaching Orders, I append the following from the Book of

Directions put into the hands of the Sisters of some Orders for their guidance and inspiration. These or similar directions are the guiding principles of the religious teacher of every Order.

The following is taken from the Constitution of the Ursulines, the first Religious Order of women that was established exclusively for teaching:

"The Religious of St. Ursula, who have for their special end the instruction and education of young ladies, should, in view of that end, lead so holy a life as to serve as an example to the children confided to them. For how can they animate these children to the practice of virtues which they themselves have not acquired, or how shall they reprove faults to which they themselves are subject? Ursulines should, then, be so exemplary, that seeing them and hearing their conversation should be sufficient to encourage their pupils in the practice of virtue and works of piety.

"Above all things they shall be faithful in guarding the precious treasure confided to them by our Lord in these young souls. They shall take great care to preserve in

them their first innocence by all the means they judge fitting. They shall esteem them all equally, not looking upon themselves as their mistresses only, but as their true mothers; and they shall consider it a special grace from God to be allowed to act as their angel guardians. They shall carefully impress upon their souls a great reverence for God, a great fear of displeasing and disobeying Him, and a horror of vice; they shall be taught to fly falsehood, underhand conversations and idleness, and to love truth.

"They are bound to employ themselves in the instruction of young girls, above all in order to form them to piety and virtue, teaching them Christian doctrine, to examine their consciences, to confess their sins, to communicate, to hear holy Mass, to pray, to recite the Rosary, to read pious books, to fly vice and the occasions of vice, to practise virtue and the works of mercy, to manage a house well, and to acquit themselves of the duties of Christians. Besides, they shall instruct them in all those things fitting to well-brought-up girls.

"They shall be as zealous and devoted when teaching children of the poor and

lower classes as those who belong to the upper classes."

The concluding extract is from the Directory of the Sisters of Mercy, and shows the spirit that animates these and other Sisterhoods in their devoted work in the schools.

"The care of the young is one of the most important duties of the Sisters of Mercy. This calls for all the energy of their zeal, since upon the education of woman largely depends the future of society.

"In order to accomplish good results, it behooves the directress in each educational establishment to make herself perfectly conversant with the responsibilities in the matter of class duties which devolve on each Sister under her charge. She is to see that they make every effort to become efficient in their respective branches of study, and that the prescribed discipline be observed.

"The prayers, Cathechism and religious instruction hold the most important place. These must be so managed as to keep up the pupils' interest, according to the varying circumstances.

"They shall carefully prepare before-

hand the lessons they have to give, striving continually to render themselves better instruments for promoting the glory of God as instructors of others by word and example.

"'They that instruct many unto justice shall shine as stars for all eternity.' This promise of the Holy Ghost assures us that those who fervently pursue the great work commenced by the Son of God, and who zealously labor in spreading that fire which He came on earth to enkindle, preserving from perdition the souls He died to save, shall inherit an everlasting renown.

"Such is our sublime vocation; but we must never forget that we cannot accomplish it worthily, efficaciously and with safety to ourselves or full profit to our neighbor, unless we give faithful, courageous, and persevering application to the practice of solid virtue, and to the exercises of the interior life.

"The manner in which the Sisters conduct themselves in the schools is of the utmost importance. To do the work of God, they should make every effort to acquire the habit of forethought, self-possession, firmness, together with a calm

and kindly exterior. Whilst always insisting on prompt obedience, they should never lose sight of prudence and charity, which know how to combine gentleness with determination.

"Let the Sisters devote their mind to make constant progress in the art of teaching, and conscientiously prepare themselves for their daily work.

"The manner of the teacher should tend to make the children feel that she has a cordial interest in each of them; yet she likewise owes it to her position as superior in the class to maintain that air of reserve which, being free from familiarity or sentimentality, is calculated to inspire respect.

"The development of the sense of gratitude in children towards their parents is of great value in education. Hence the Sisters should impress on the pupils in our boarding schools the necessity of returning an acknowledgment, with thanks, when their parents send them some gift or some article of clothing, etc. Children are inclined to take things provided by their good parents as a matter of course, and have but little consideration for the efforts made for their comfort and happiness by

those who love them. To merit being considered 'well-bred,' a young lady will be attentive to the little social courtesies taught in school, and always bear in mind that 'charity begins at home.'

"In forming an estimate of the children's progress, it is to be remembered that development of character, the good will and amiable dispositions manifested in the daily exercises during the scholastic year, are of more weight as a standard of excellence than proficiency in memory exercises, although these are to be by no means neglected or undervalued."

After reading the above, it is not hard to understand the good results attained under the Teaching Sisterhoods. The mere association with women animated by such lofty motives is an education in itself.

In these days of riot in education and morals, it is safe to say that there is no branch of the Sisterhoods that is more urgently needed than the Teaching Orders. Indeed, it is realized by the Sisters themselves, as well as by the ecclesiastical authorities. Nearly every Sisterhood in the United States is now engaged in teaching.

In different epochs, the Church of God has employed various means for carrying on her work. Her life is a reproduction of her Founder's. As Jesus Christ in His mission employed prayer, atonement, works of mercy and teaching, so does His Spouse, the Church. All these things are necessary in her work, which is His work.

Today we see throughout the world that the Church of God is living over again the life of Christ. As He withdrew from men and spent days and nights alone in prayer and penance for the world, so does the Church, by her Orders of contemplation and atonement, fulfil this same office. As He went up and down throughout Galilee and Judea ministering unto the needs of mankind, so does she in all lands of the world relieve human misery by her Red Cross and Social Service Orders. And as He was the Good Shepherd who sought the sheep that strayed, and brought into the fold Magdalen and the adulteress, and even the thief, so does His Church by the Rescue Orders reach out and give a helping hand to the wayward and unfortunate.

But the greatest part of our Lord's

ministry was spent in teaching. So today the great work of the Church is teaching. Prayer and atonement, works of mercy, reclamation, and other things, are vital to her existence, but teaching is paramount. That is why all the Orders in the Church, besides their special mission, also teach. Even the cloistered Orders engage in this holy work by instructing those who come within the range of their influence.

But besides this incidental teaching done by all the Orders, there are distinctive Teaching Orders in the Church, whose special purpose is to carry on Christ's work by teaching. The Church needs all her Orders. And God invites devout souls to any and all of them. But, in these days when teaching is more necessary than ever before, it is gratifying to see the great army of Religious who devote their lives to the class-room. It is a hard but fruitful ministry. And the divinity of the Church shows itself in this, that when she needs women of self-sacrifice for such disinterested and unspectacular work, they flock to her in thousands.

In America today we may say that teaching is the distinctive feature of con-

vent life. It is the most urgent necessity of the age. That is why so many women of true Catholic instinct give their lives to the Teaching Orders.[1] And what a consolation it is for them that they are engaged in the very work that took up most of our Lord's time during His ministry on earth.

Because the work is routine, for that very reason is it dear to the heart of Christ and so meritorious. "Learn of Me, who am meek and humble of heart." Those who consecrate their lives to teaching are giving our Lord a good proof that they are complying with His appeal. Teaching as Religious do it may be unspectacular in the eyes of the world, but in the eyes of heaven it is so glorious that God Himself declares that "they who instruct others unto justice shall shine like stars for all eternity."

[1] What has been said of the teaching Sisterhoods applies also to the Brotherhoods. There is no nobler career open to a young man than that of teaching. When that profession is taken up as a Religious it makes one a true missioner of Jesus Christ.

XIV

SISTERHOODS OF PRAYER AND ATONEMENT

XIV

SISTERHOODS OF PRAYER AND ATONEMENT

RELIGION IS NOT A THING WITH a separate existence. It does not live by itself, apart. It does not stand alone. It is woven into the very texture of life. Otherwise it is but a name. The man of any religious creed is moulded by that creed, if it is real. Religion, I mean the true Religion, helps us to live the way God wants us to live. And He wants us to live in such a way that we may share His blessedness hereafter. That is the meaning of Religion, — a path to God.

The Church is the means established by Our Divine Lord to continue the work He began during His mortal career. An important part of that work was prayer and atonement. Besides preaching and teaching and healing and consoling, He suffered and He prayed.

So likewise His Church, although so busily engaged in ministering to the people

for their welfare and sanctification, is not unmindful of prayer and atonement. Rather because she is so deeply and truly engaged in the welfare of her people does she give herself to prayer and atonement.

This is seen in her liturgy, in her feasts and fasts, her seasons of prayer and of penance. But as besides the prayer and suffering, which accompanied the ministry of Jesus, He often withdrew apart and spent long seasons in prayer and atonement, so does the Church, his representative on earth, devote herself by means of her cloistered orders to these sacred practices.

Our Lord tells us, "Without Me you can do nothing!" He meant that for His Church as well as for individuals. He signified by these words that for the things which count for eternal life His grace was necessary. It is by prayer that we get this grace of God. The individual must pray for God's help and so must the Church. As the individual has a life of struggle, so has the Church. True, God promises His Church that it will never fail, but it is because the Church will always pray.

Prayer establishes a communication between earth and heaven. It is an intercourse between the Creator and the creature. God, it is true, is everywhere. He is, by His power, present in all creation, in plant, in animal, in the expanse of ocean and in the boundless space of the firmament. But he is intellectually and spiritually present to a soul in prayer. Prayer makes an interchange between God and man.

By prayer the desires of the soul ascend to God, and in response to it the grace of God descends into the soul of man. Thus God, having given the initial grace which inspires man to pray, gives in return His abundant grace. And this help from on high is necessary for the Church as well as for the individual. For this reason, in the liturgy of the Mass, there is a special prayer for the Church.

Realizing therefore the necessity of prayer for her very life, the Church, besides her ordinary liturgical prayers, calls on all her children to pray for her. But she does more. Knowing that alms-deeds, penance and suffering add efficacy to prayer, she blesses those holy souls who in imitation

of her Master, withdraw apart from the world to consecrate themselves to a life of penance and prayer. These become her heavy artillery in her battle with the world. She looks to them for special protection and help when she is hard pressed. She knows that her Commander-in-Chief is looking down from heaven and that next to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacraments, it is by penance and prayer that He deigns to send His best help. She knows that He wants her to win by His appointed weapons and that He has designated penance and prayer particularly.

Therefore she has established Religious orders of prayer and atonement, she has put her seal and blessing on a life consecrated to sacrifice for the welfare of souls and for reparation to God for the sins and ingratitude of mankind. Like her Founder, Jesus Christ, the Church holds prayer and penance paramount. Christ's whole life was filled with prayer. His mission, which was the same as that of the Church today, called forth His prayers. He, then, is our authority and example for looking to prayer for help and support. "Jesus went up into a mountain to pray." (Matt.

14: 23.) "He passed the whole night in the prayer of God." (Luke 3: 28.) And He tells us why: "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights." (John 1: 17.)

Prayer is not merely for those who pray and for their own benefit. Our Lord distinctly tells us that we should also pray for others. What a wonderful mystery, that God Himself should bid us pray for the success of His own work!

It shows that in certain respects He makes His mission depend on prayer. That is the premium He puts on it. No matter what valuation we give it, we could not value it so highly as that. Here are His own words: "Jesus saith to His disciples: The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into His vineyard." (Matt. 9: 37).

That is why St. Dominic, before he set out on his mission, begged prayers for God's blessing on it. That is why before he established the great Order of the Dominican Preachers, he first founded the Dominican Order of Nuns. And the reason

was this: he wished prayer to go before his preachers and to accompany their preaching and to follow after their preaching.

He therefore founded the Dominican Order of Nuns as a cloistered Order of saintly women, whose prayers and penances were to call down from heaven God's blessing on the activities of his Preaching Order. For he recalled what Scripture says on the efficacy of prayer and penance: "Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayer if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord." (Judith 4: 11.)

The apostles themselves, although the very ambassadors of God, doing His own work, realized that for the life of the spirit, the supernatural life, which is the Church's mission, prayer was the indispensable requisite. "As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them: Separate Me Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto I have taken them. Then they, fasting and praying and imposing their hands upon them, sent them away." (Acts, 13: 2.)

God does not need our prayers. He does

not need our penances. But these are indications of our dependence on Him and of our earnestness. They are an evidence that we are doing our part or trying to, and that is what He wants. By penance and prayer, we add our blood to His, we sacrifice our time, our bodily ease, in His cause. By that He knows we love Him. We give Him the best proof; the proof He Himself gave on Calvary that He loved us.

And so the Church makes much of prayer and penance. In her service there are Religious Orders devoted almost exclusively to intercourse with God. They pray to God, they suffer for God, they live for God. Innumerable blessings they call down upon this earth. They ward off God's anger for the sins of the people. As Abraham by his prayer saved his people, so do they. They aid the priests of God and the missioners and the rulers of the Church. As St. Paul begged the prayers of the faithful on his labors, so the Church looks to sanctuaries of prayer and holiness in her needs.

Some people fancy that the cloistered life is a selfish one. It is the very opposite.

A selfish soul could not live there an hour. True, those in these hallowed places seek their own salvation, but by helping others to attain theirs. Sacrifice and selfishness cannot go together. The cloistered life is a life of sacrifice.

Our Lord's life was a life of sacrifice. He, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, confined Himself in the narrow limits of Judea, and His life was one of service and prayer. That is the life of the cloistered Nun, and for love of Him.

For in the cloister it is service as well as sacrifice. The whole day is not spent with hands clasped in prayer. True, prayer forms a special duty of the day. But a life united with God is a prayer all day and all night. Work is prayer when done in the spirit of prayer. Rest is prayer when taken as obedience directs.

A soldier is in a campaign, not only when in the trenches, but also when resting between times. He is waging war, not only when engaged in a bayonet charge, but also when he is making ready his weapons. The Commissariat or Supply Department is part of the army as well as the artillery.

The cloistered Nuns devote their whole lives to prayer and penance and charity. That was Christ's life. Some people fancy that the cloistered life is inactive. There could be no greater misconception. I dare say you will find no greater activity anywhere in the world than in the cloister.

To illustrate this, let me take you to a monastery strictly enclosed, and where, besides, they have perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. I have in mind the Dominican Convent at Hunt's Point, New York. The Corpus Christi Monastery is the official title of this convent.

Corpus Christi means the Body of Christ. In this case the title is significant, for the Blessed Sacrament is perpetually exposed and adored there. At stated times, all the Nuns kneel before the altar in prayer, but at no time is there an absence of worshippers. All day and all night, any hour you chance to pay a visit to the chapel, you will find some of the Nuns in adoration. From the rising of the sun to its going down, and from sunset to sunrise, their Sacramental Jesus is not without attendants.

The rest of the world may be too busy

with the things that come and go to find time for their Lord and Redeemer, but there, before the altar, consecrated virgins keep Him company. There, kneeling in adoration, they worship the Ruler of the World, and there they pour out their hearts in prayer for mankind.

The holy Nuns by turns take their place before the Tabernacle. While some are doing household work, or engaged in service for the poor who come to their door for help, others are in adoration. But they assemble at frequent intervals to worship all together their Sacramental Lord.

They begin their service of prayer and adoration at the midnight hour. Every night at twelve o'clock, when the world is in sleep or sin, the bell summons them from their repose, which they began at nine o'clock of the evening before. They assemble in the chapel, where they recite the Divine Office. After Matins and Lauds, they spend some time in meditation. Several being designated to pass the watches of the night in adoration, the rest retire to their cells to repose on their hard beds until 5.40 A.M. when they are again sum-

moned to the chapel to resume the recitation of the Office and to meditate.

After an hour or so, Mass is begun, at which all assist and receive Corpus Christi, the Body of Christ, their holy Communion. At eight o'clock they breakfast. This meal consists of a cup of black coffee and two ounces of bread on fasting days, three ounces on other days. As their Lent begins on the 24th of September and continues until Easter, the two ounces rather than the three make the scant meal.

After breakfast, the Nuns engage in various services (what these occupations are I shall enumerate further on), until 10:30, when they again repair to the chapel for Office and prayer. Dinner is at eleven o'clock. It consists of vegetable soup, fish or eggs, one vegetable, and fruit sometimes. Dinner over, they spend one hour in social intercourse, followed by another hour which is at their disposal for reading, study, devotion or relaxation.

At 2 P.M. they assemble in the chapel for the Office and prayer, and then take up their occupations until 4:30. This hour finds them reciting Vespers in the chapel, after which they assist at Benediction of

the Blessed Sacrament and then recite the Rosary. Supper follows at 6:30, and after that, the Office of Compline and night prayers. At nine they retire to rest until midnight, when they are again summoned to begin another day of service and sacrifice, another day of benediction to mankind and of glory to God. That is the outline of their day.

And their occupations? It is amazing to see all the work they do. There is not an idle hand nor an idle moment in the monastery. Some are engaged preparing food for poor people who come hungry to their door. Daily forty or fifty deserving poor or unfortunate sit down at the table they provide. Besides, they make up basket dinners to send out to families who are needy, but too sensitive to come to the gate for food. In all things they consider charity. With tact and delicacy they dispense their supplies as if unto Christ Himself, whom they recognize in His brethren, no matter how lowly they may be.

While some are thus engaged in providing food for the poor, others are making garments for them. Besides this work for the poor of the neighborhood, they make

altar vestments for poor churches and missions. Hundreds of churches are thus supplied which would otherwise be without the proper equipment for divine service. Moreover, they make various articles of devotion for the pious faithful. They also do exquisite work in illuminating and sacred painting for churches.

Their life is thus a perpetual service. By their prayers and penances they draw God's blessing down on the work of the Church. They help make reparation to God for the neglect and indifference of so many in the world. They ward off from mankind the wrath of God for its iniquity. Like lightning rods, they draw away from the world the punishments which would otherwise strike it for its sinfulness.

Sanctuaries of prayer and charity, they help the souls and bodies of mankind. These cloisters are as it were oases which the eye of God beholds in this human desert of sinfulness. What a divine life for those who are called to it!

In the turmoil of daily life in the world, there are souls that like to withdraw from the crowd and be alone. Such persons, if they be religiously inclined, find the

cloister a Garden of Paradise. The Church of God, because it is divine and universal, meets the requirements of every state and condition of mankind.

In the cloister, those whose nature it is to lead prayerful lives find a haven of rest. It moreover affords them an opportunity of doing service in the way they are best fitted to serve. For some can serve best by prayer and atonement. By such a life they are carrying on the work begun by Christ on Calvary. They are thus associated with Him in His mission.

If we value His atonement, we must value that of those who help bring it into the lives of others. And that is what they do. Prayer and atonement did not lose their efficacy with Christ. Rather they only began with Him, to continue always.

Throughout our land there are many consecrated places like that at Hunt's Point. Besides the monasteries of the Dominican Order, there are also those of the Carmelites and Franciscans, who follow very much the same manner of life described above. I have made mention of the Corpus Christi Monastery, not that it is distinctive among the monasteries

of contemplation and atonement, but to give a specific example of the life in these sanctuaries.

At Baltimore is the Mother-house of the Carmelites, the spiritual daughters of the great St. Theresa. There, as well as in the monasteries of the Order to be found in many of our large cities, you will find the life of prayer and penance which characterized the cloisters established by this holy Foundress centuries ago. The good they do will be known only when the record of things that count in God's sight is held up to the gaze of the world.

The Franciscan Poor Clares and the Passionists and other Orders have monasteries similar to the Dominican and the Carmelite monasteries. I should like to enumerate in detail these hallowed places, but I do not wish to delay. In another part of this volume, they will be found in a classified list. In all these cloisters, souls are leading lives of heroism, service and sanctity.

It was in such an abode that the seraphic Theresa received that heavenly spark which has inflamed the hearts of thousands of her spiritual children in every generation since her day. Her life is sufficient answer to

those who fancy that a Nun's career is a wasted one. For although she was of a cloistered Order of the strictest character, never did woman accomplish more good in the world than this sainted contemplative.

Sublimest of mystics though she was, she nevertheless showed extraordinary practical ability and strong common sense. As a foundress of numerous monasteries, as a capable executive, and as a writer whose words are inspirational, she evidenced to the world the truth of Our Saviour's saying: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and all other things shall be added unto you." Her life and her words are a rich legacy to her daughters in religion and to the religious world.

In an age when material values and unrestrained force seem to dominate mankind, we need the lesson and example of St. Theresa. Her spirit of unworldliness and prayer and penance is found up and down our land in the cloistered monasteries of the various Orders. We should cherish these houses of prayer, where the sublimest of womanhood are dedicated to the true uplift of the world. For while the world is busy with everything except God, these

consecrated virgins make Him their main object of service and adoration.

Daily they have Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Kneeling devoutly before their Sacramental King, they endeavor to do Him homage for the coldness and indifference of His subjects throughout the world. As the incense rises before the altar, it is accompanied by that other incense from pure hearts, the words of praise, thanksgiving and worship which ascend as a sweet odor from earth to heaven. The Tantum Ergo of St. Thomas supplies them with an expression of their love and veneration. Devoutly they chant these consecrated words:

Down in adoration falling,
Lo! the sacred Host we hail!
Lo! o'er ancient forms departing,
Newer rites of grace prevail;
Faith for all defects supplying,
Where the feeble senses fail.

To the Everlasting Father,
And the Son who reigns on high,
With the Holy Ghost proceeding
Forth from each eternally,
Be salvation, honor, blessing,
Might and endless majesty. AMEN

Not satisfied with praise and worship, they furthermore add supplication to their adoration:

Jesus Shepherd, Bread indeed,
Thou take pity on our need;
Thou Thy flock in safety feed,
Thou protect us, Thou us lead
To the land of heavenly grace.

Thou who feedest us below,
Source of all we have or know,
Grant that at Thy feast of love,
Sitting with the saints above,
We may see Thee face to face.
AMEN. ALLELUIA

Perhaps, instead of those words of Lauda Sion, they pour forth their sentiments in that other immortal hymn of the Angelic Aquinas, the O Salutaris:

O Saving Victim! opening wide
The gate of heaven to man below!
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

To Thy great Name be endless praise,
Immortal Godhead! One in Three!
Oh, grant us endless length of days
In our true land with Thee!

From this worship of their Sacramental King, they go forth gladly to do service for Him. As soldiers of the cross, by prayer, work and penance, they aid Him in His campaign for the salvation of souls. And because they are serving a loving Master and love much themselves, they rejoice in their privations and sufferings.

Love makes all things easy. Love of God makes the hardest things welcome. St. Theresa was wont to exclaim: "O Lord, let me suffer for Thee, or let me die!" That is the spirit of those generous souls who give their lives to contemplation and atonement. A return of love for love, love that will be satisfied with no half measures.

That explains the life of the cloistered Nun. It is her reply to Christ, who says: "Child, give Me thy heart; behold Mine which has loved thee so much. I proved My love by sacrifice; do thou prove thine. I suffered to save others; thy sufferings will unite with Mine for their saving. In this way, thy prayers and mortifications become part of the atonement for the transgressions of mankind. Thou dost thus share in My work on earth. Thou shalt also share in My glory in heaven."

That is the message the cloistered Nun receives from her Spouse, Christ. That explains the contentment of her life. People, especially non-Catholics, wonder how anyone can put up with such a life. Love is the answer, love stronger than earthly love. For the love of a man, what has not a woman accomplished and suffered! And gladly. But the love of Christ is greater in those who become His brides. The bride of Christ does not desire better treatment than her Spouse. And so she rejoices in sharing His cross.

I once asked a Nun how she could bear the hard life of the cloister with its monotony and penances. She answered me that it was because it was hard she chose it. She wanted to do something for the Lord that would show her love. "Anybody can do easy and agreeable things," she continued, "but only those who love can do hard things. Besides, a peace fills my soul that all the pleasures of the world could not give me."

And that is true. Lovers delight to exchange gifts. Christ's gift to His dear ones is contentment. Surely nowhere else in the world does it so abound as in the heart of a true Religious.

A non-Catholic remarked to me on a certain occasion that it was cruel to immure women in a cloister, behind a grating, and to give them no occupation but adoration and penance. I informed him that, first of all, they were not immured. They deliberately chose the life after having had years within the cloister to accept or reject it. It answered the call of their hearts as nothing else in the world did.

Sacrifice is dear to magnanimous spirits. Sacrifice which serves the welfare of man and the honor of God has a marvellous attraction for religious natures. Nuns, as a rule, represent the finest human texture. No wonder, then, that they are attracted by sublime self-sacrifice in the cause of Christ.

Our best women, in war times, delight to take up exacting work in hospitals and camps for the service of the soldiers. God's chosen souls delight to aid Him for the souls of men as well as for their bodies. If women can devote themselves cheerfully to work for men, why may they not do so for God! And they do.

While visiting at a cloistered monastery, I asked the Mother Superior if the iron

grating was not a rather repelling thing to behold. She answered: "Not at all; on the contrary, it was the very thing which decided my vocation."

"And how was that?" I said.

"Because," she replied, "I wanted to feel that nothing could interfere with my Lord and me."

"But is that not a rather selfish view?" I said.

"How can anything done for the Lord be selfish," she rejoined, "since He wants our love and service only to benefit mankind? We, in loving and serving Him, are helping Him in His mission among men."

It is the realization that they are engaged in the noblest service on earth that makes the Sisters so content. They are content, make no mistake about that. Not that they do not have their trials and vexations, but they know that these are a part of the cross, and they carry it cheerfully in the footsteps of their Lord and Leader.

It is precisely this that forms the merit of the Religious Life. If it were a path of roses, there would be no astonishment that many walked in it. But it is a path

of thorns, and steep and stony, and that is the divinity of it, that such a path attracts numerous souls. It may be a steep and stony path, but it leads direct to the heart of God.

If you are on the way to your lover, you do not mind the road. If, on the way, you are helping others, you walk rejoicing. The cloister is the path that brings the Nun to her beloved Spouse, Jesus Christ. On her way, she is a helping hand to many a travel-stained and wearied wayfarer.

Do you realize now why the cloistered Nun is so content? Besides, her Lover is ever at her side!

XV

SISTERHOODS AND BROTHERHOODS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE NATURE OF THEIR WORK

XV

SISTERHOODS AND BROTHERHOODS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE NATURE OF THEIR WORK[1]

AGNES, SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Hospitals, Orphan Asylums, Homes for Aged, Indian Schools, House for Emigrants. Teach.

ANN, SISTERS OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

APOSTOLATE, SISTERS AUXILIARIES OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

ASSUMPTION, LITTLE SISTERS OF THE
Nurse the Sick Poor in their Own Homes.

ASSUMPTION OF THE B.V.M., SISTERS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

BAPTISTINE SISTERS
Conduct Day Nurseries, Orphan Asylums. Teach.

[1] This information taken from THE OFFICIAL CATHOLIC DIRECTORY. Published and Copyrighted by P. J. Kenedy & Sons.

BASIL THE GREAT, SISTERS OF THE ORDER OF ST.

Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

BENEDICT, SISTERS OF ST.

Conduct Orphan Asylums, Missions. Care for the Sick. Teach.

BENEDICTINE SISTERS, FRENCH

Conduct Manual Training Schools for Girls. Contemplate.

BENEDICTINE SISTERS, OLIVETAN

Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

BENEDICTINE SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION

Perpetual Adoration (main object).

BERNARDINE SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

BERNARDINE SISTERS OF ESQUERMES

Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

BLESSED SACRAMENT, SISTERS OF THE

Conduct Schools for Indian and Colored People, Academies, Orphan Asylums. Visit the Sick and Prisoners.

BON SECOURS, SISTERS OF THE

Nurse the Poor and the Rich, Reparation.

CAPUCHIN, SISTERS

Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

CARMELITE SISTERS OF THE DIVINE HEART OF JESUS

Educate the Poor in Home Keeping. Conduct Homes for Aged, Missions.

CARMELITES, DISCALCED

Perpetual Adoration.

CASIMIR, SISTERS OF ST.

Educate Children of Lithuanian Birth and Descent. Social Service. Reparation.

CENACLE, LADIES OF THE

Conduct Retreats. Perpetual Adoration. Teach Christian Doctrine.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF (*Gray Nuns*)

Conduct Hospitals, Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Poor, Homes for the Aged. Teach.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF NAZARETH

Conduct Orphan Asylums, Hospitals, Infirmaries, Homes. Teach.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF, OF OUR LADY, MOTHER OF MERCY

Conduct Hospitals. Teach. Reparation.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF, OF PROVIDENCE

Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged, Hospitals. Teach.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF, OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Conduct Hospitals, Orphan Asylums. Teach. Reparation.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF, OF ST. LOUIS
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF, OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Foundling Asylums, Insane Asylums, Hospitals, Industrial Schools, Homes for the Aged. Care for Needy and Homeless Mothers. Teach.

CHARITY, SISTERS OF, PALLOTINE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

CHRETIENNE, SISTERS OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

CHRISTIAN CHARITY, SISTERS OF
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

CYRIL AND METHODIUS, SISTERS OF STS.
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

DAUGHTERS OF THE CROSS
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

DAUGHTERS OF THE CROSS AND PASSION (*Passionist Nuns*)
Contemplate.

DAUGHTERS OF JESUS
Care for the Sick. Educate the Orphans. Teach.

DAUGHTERS OF WISDOM
Conduct Hospitals, Home for Cripples and Defectives. Teach.

DIVINE COMPASSION, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Mental and Industrial Training Schools for Young Girls.

DOMINIC, SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Hospitals, Homes for Ladies. Teach.

DOMINIC, SISTERS OF ST., OF THE CONGREGATION OF ST. ROSE OF LIMA
Nurse Incurable Cancer.

DOMINIC, SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST.
Conduct Homes for Orphans and Destitute Children. Teach.

DOMINICAN NUNS OF THE CONGREGATION OF ST. CATHERINE DE RICCI
Conduct Spiritual Retreats, Homes for Ladies and Young Business Women, Private Boarding Schools.

DOMINICAN NUNS OF THE PERPETUAL ROSARY
Contemplate.

DOMINICAN NUNS OF THE SECOND ORDER (*Cloistered*)
Perpetual Adoration.

DOMINICAN SISTERS OF THE SICK POOR
Nurse the Sick Poor in their Homes.

DOROTHY, SISTERS OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

FAITHFUL COMPANIONS OF JESUS
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

FELICIAN SISTERS, O. S. F.
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

FRANCIS, HOSPITAL SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Hospitals.

FRANCIS, SCHOOL SISTERS OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Foundling Asylums, Homes for Aged, Day Nurseries, Indian Schools, Hospitals, Homes for Working Girls. Teach.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF ST., OF MARY IMMACULATE
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Industrial Schools for Indian Girls. Teach.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF ST., OF THE CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF LOURDES
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF ST., OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF ST., OF THE SACRED HEART
Conduct Hospitals, Homes for Aged, Orphan Asylums.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF THE POOR OF ST.

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Conduct Hospitals.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORD. OF ST.
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for Aged and Destitute Children. Teach Indian and Colored Children.

FRANCIS, SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI, SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

FRANCIS SERAPH, POOR SISTERS OF ST., OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for Aged, Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF MARY
Conduct General Mission Work.

FRANCISCAN SCHOOL SISTERS (*Polish.*)
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for Ladies, Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF BALTIMORE CITY
Visit the Poor, Sick, Almshouses and Jails. Conduct Industrial Schools. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY
Conduct Homes for the Aged, Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF MARY, LITTLE
Conduct Hospitals, Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF PERPETUAL ADORATION
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Indian Boarding Schools, Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF ST. KUNEGUNDA (*Polish*)
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged and Crippled, Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
Nurse. Reparation.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged, Hospitals. Teach.

FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF THE ATONEMENT
Conduct Charitable Works. Teach.

GOOD SHEPHERD, SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY OF THE
Reform Wayward Girls.

MAGDALENES
Penance.

GOOD SHEPHERD SISTERS OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY OF REFUGE
Reform Wayward Girls.

GRAY NUNS OF THE CROSS
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged, Hospitals. Teach.

HELPERS OF THE HOLY SOULS
Conduct Charitable Works, Religious Instruction. Visit the Sick Poor.

HOLY CHILD JESUS, SOCIETY OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

HOLY CROSS, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

HOLY CROSS AND THE SEVEN DOLORS, SISTERS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

HOLY FAMILY, CONGREGATION OF THE (*Colored*)
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged. Teach.

HOLY FAMILY, LITTLE SISTERS OF THE
Care for the Sick and Poor. Teach.

HOLY FAMILY, SISTERS OF THE
Care for the Sick Poor, Conduct Nurseries. Teach.

HOLY FAMILY, SISTERS OF THE, OF NAZARETH
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Working Girls' Homes, Hospitals. Teach.

HOLY GHOST, DAUGHTERS OF THE
Conduct Work among Negroes. Teach.

HOLY GHOST, SERVANTS OF THE
Conduct Missions. Teach.

HOLY GHOST, SERVANTS OF THE, MISSIONARY SISTERS
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

HOLY GHOST, THE SISTERS SERVANTS OF THE
Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (exclusively).

HOLY HEART OF MARY, SISTERS SERVANTS OF THE
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

HOLY HUMILITY OF MARY, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

HOLY NAMES OF JESUS AND MARY, SISTERS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

HOLY ROSARY, CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

HUMILITY OF MARY, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, SISTERS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS SERVANTS OF THE
Conduct Orphan and Foundling Asylums, Industrial Schools, Homes. Teach.

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, DAUGHTERS OF THE

Conduct Asylums, Lay Apostolate. Teach.

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, SISTERS OF THE

Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, SISTERS SERVANTS OF THE (GOOD SHEPHERD)

Conduct Industrial and Reformatory Schools.

INCARNATE WORD, SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE

Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged, Hospitals. Teach.

INCARNATE WORD, SISTERS OF THE, AND OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

INFANT JESUS, SISTERS OF THE

Nurse the Sick Poor in their Homes.

INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Conduct Day Nurseries. Teach Catechism.

INSTITUTE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (*Ladies of Loretto*)

Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

JACUT, ST., SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART OF

Conduct Domestic Department in Seminaries.

JESUS-MARY, RELIGIOUS OF
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

JOSEPH, HOSPITAL SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Hospitals.

JOSEPH, POLISH SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

JOSEPH, SISTERS OF ST.
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Deaf Mute Institutes, Homes for Working Girls, Day Nurseries, Hospitals, Settlement Work. Teach.

JOSEPH, SISTERS OF ST., OF CARONDELET
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Day Nurseries, Homes for Friendless, Deaf Mutes, Indians, Hospitals. Teach.

JOSEPH, SISTERS OF ST., OF PEACE
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for Blind, Homes for Working Girls, Hospitals. Teach.

LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY
Care for Sick in their own Homes

LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR
Conduct Homes for the Aged and Destitute.

LORETTO, SISTERS OF, AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

MANTELLATE SISTERS, O. S. M.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

MARIANITES OF THE HOLY CROSS
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for Boys. Teach.

MARIE REPARATRICE
Perpetual Adoration. Conduct Retreats.

MARY, SISTERS OF ST.
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

MERCY, SISTERS OF
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Hospitals, Training Schools for Boys, Industrial Schools for Girls, Boarding and Industrial Schools for Indians, Homes for Young Ladies, Business Girls, Convalescents and the Aged, Vacation Homes for Children. Visit the Sick in their Homes, Hospitals and Jails. Reform the Wayward. Teach.

MERCY, SISTERS OF, OF THE HOLY CROSS
Conduct Hospitals. Reparation.

MISERICORDE, SISTERS OF
Conduct Maternity Wards: (Public) General Hospital, (Private) Care for Homeless Mothers.

MAGDALENES
Penance.

MISSIONARIES OF ST. MARY AND LADIES CATECHISTS
Teach Catechism to Indians and the Poor.

MT. CARMEL, SISTERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

NOSTRA DOMINA, SCHOOL SISTERS DE
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

NOTRE DAME, SCHOOL SISTERS OF
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

NOTRE DAME, SCHOOL SISTERS OF (*Namur*)
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

NOTRE DAME, SISTERS OF
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

NOTRE DAME, SISTERS OF THE CONGREGATION OF
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

NOTRE DAME DE BON SECOURS
Care for the Sick in their Own Homes.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES, ORDER OF
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

OUR LADY OF SION, SISTERS OF
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

PERPETUAL ADORATION, CONGREGATION OF
Perpetual Adoration

PIOUS SOCIETY OF MISSIONS
Conduct Hospitals. Teach.

POOR CLARES

Prayer, Atonement.

POOR HANDMAIDS OF JESUS CHRIST
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged, Hospitals. Care for the Sick in their Homes. Teach.

PRECIOUS BLOOD, SISTERS ADORERS OF THE
Contemplate.

PRECIOUS BLOOD, SISTERS OF THE MOST
Conduct Orphan Asylums. Teach.

PRECIOUS BLOOD OF JESUS, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Homes for the Aged. Teach.

PRESENTATION, SISTERS OF ST. MARY OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

PRESENTATION OF MARY, SISTERS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

PRESENTATION OF THE B. V. M., SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Foundling Asylums. Teach.

PROVIDENCE, OBLATE SISTERS OF
Educate Colored Children.

PROVIDENCE, SISTERS OF
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Homes for the Aged, Homes for Working Girls, Hospitals. Teach.

PROVIDENCE, SISTERS OF DIVINE
Conduct Foundling Asylums, Homes for Boys, Hospitals. Teach.

RESURRECTION, SISTERS OF THE (*Polish*)
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SACRAMENTINE NUNS
Conduct Boarding School, Retreats. Perpetual Adoration.

SACRED HEART, MISSION HELPERS OF THE
Conduct General Mission Work.

SACRED HEART, MISSION WORKERS OF THE
Conduct General Mission Work.

SACRED HEART, MISSIONRAY SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Hospitals. Teach.

SACRED HEART, RELIGIOUS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SACRED HEART, SISTERS OF THE (*Apostolic Zelatrices*)
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SACRED HEART OF JESUS, SERVANTS OF THE (*Mexican*)
Conduct Orphan Asylums.

SACRED HEART OF MARY, RELIGIOUS OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SACRED HEARTS, RELIGIOUS OF THE HOLY UNION OF THE
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SACRED HEARTS, SISTERS OF THE, AND OF THE PERPETUAL ADORATION
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SALESIAN SISTERS OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

SAVIOUR, SISTERS OF THE DIVINE
Care for the Sick in their Homes.

SERVANTS OF MARY
Care for Sick and Poor. Teach.

SORROWFUL MOTHER, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Orphan Asylums, Hospitals. Teach.

THERESA OF JESUS, SOCIETY OF ST. (*Theresian Sisters*)
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

URSULA, SOCIETY OF THE SISTERS OF ST. OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN
Social Service.. Reparation. Teach.

URSULINE NUNS
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

URSULINE SISTERS
Social Service. Reparation. Teach.

VISITATION NUNS
Contemplate. Teach.

ZITA, SISTERS OF THE
Conduct Homes for Friendless Women.

BROTHERHOODS

Almost everything in this volume pertains to the Religious Orders of men as well as to those of women. All the general principles of vocation apply equally to Nuns and Brothers, and Religious generally. In nearly every chapter Brotherhood could be substituted for Sisterhood.

The Sisterhoods were given prominence because, as a rule, the public identifies the convent with women rather than with men, although there are convents of men, just as there are monasteries of women.

The list of Brotherhoods given will be a help to young men desirous of consecrating their lives to the service of religion. Many youths who by circumstances are not qualified for the priesthood wish nevertheless to dedicate themselves in a special way to the service of God.

Most of the Brotherhoods here listed engage in teaching boys or in caring for them. Others aid the clergy in Church work and in the domestic duties of the Convent or Monastery.

BROTHERHOODS

Alexian Brothers
Benedictine Brothers
Blessed Sacrament, Congregation of the
Capucian Brothers
Carmelite, Order of Discalced
Carmelites, Order of Calced
Cistercians or Trappists, The Reformed
Charity, Order of
Charity, Congregation of the Brothers of
Christian Schools, Brothers of the
Christian Brothers of Ireland
Christian Instruction, Brothers of (Lemennais Brothers)
Canons of the Holy Cross
Dominican Brothers
Francis de Sales, St. (Salesians)
Francis, Third Order Regular of St. (T. O. R.)
Francis Seraphicus, The Brothers of the Poor of St.
Franciscan Brothers (O. F. M.)
Franciscan Brothers (O. M. C.)
Franciscan Brothers (O. S. F.)
Gabriel, Brothers of St.

Holy Cross, Brothers of the
Holy Ghost, Congregation of the
Heart of Mary, Missionary Sons of the Immaculate
Holy Infancy and Youth of Jesus, Brothers of
Jesuit Brothers
Marist Brothers
Mary of Paris, Society of (Brothers of Mary)
Oblates of Mary Immaculate
Our Lady of Lourdes, Brothers of
Passion, Congregation of the
Precious Blood, Congregation of the
Premonstratensian (Norbertine)
Redemptorist Brothers
Sacred Heart, Missionaries of the
Sacred Heart, Brothers of the
Saviour, Society of the Divine
Servite Brothers
Theatine Brothers
Viator, The Clerics of St.
Vincentian Brothers
Word, Society of the Divine
Xaverian Brothers.

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AUTHOR

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THE HAND OF GOD—A Theology for the People: This volume aims to show God and His work in a true light. A reliable source of information for Catholic and would-be converts.

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YOU AND YOURS—Practical Talks on Family Life: Sensible and welcome advice for each member of the family. Present day problems are handled in a forceful and interesting manner.

CONVENT LIFE—The Meaning of a Religious Vocation: A practical and convincing treatment of all the aspects of the Religious Life from the indications of a vocation to perfection in this holy state.

CHRIST OR CHAOS: The bark of Protestantism is sinking. Present-day discussions between Fundamentalist and Modernist amount to just so much ballast thrown overboard. The author of this important book aims to prove that in a very few years "religion" is bound to mean either paganism or Catholicism.

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